

**Stars in Their Eyes: Contemporary Artists' Expressions of Fandom  
and How Fan Identities Influence Art**



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Numbered edition of: 10

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58 minutes

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Single-channel colour video projection with audio (online screenshot)

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2005

Cut-out, ink on magazine paper

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No longer in existence

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Private Collection

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Private Collection

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Private Collection

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Oil on canvas

h. 72 x w. 84 in.

Collection: Jerome Jacobs

Figure 71

Mellor, D.

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2007

Oil on canvas

h. 72 x w. 84 in.

Private Collection

## **Stars in Their Eyes: Contemporary Artists' Expressions of Fandom and How Fan Identities Influence Art**

Long Abstract

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DPhil, Lady Margaret Hall

Ana Finel Honigman

This thesis examines and endeavours to challenge how fandom is conceived and received in contemporary art. It argues that fandom is evident in some artists' works and addresses misconceptions about art by four artists who explicitly express their fan identities in their artwork and examines how a finer understanding of fandom can enrich contemporary art discourse and illuminate the artists' works. This thesis provides tools for critics to distinguish sincere and confident fandom in artists' works, rather than assume cynicism, irony and detachment when artists engage with images of celebrities. It is motivated by the conviction that fandom is a significant aspect of contemporary culture that influences individuals' personal and communal expression but remains mislabelled and underappreciated by contemporary art's critical community. It will focus attention on fandom as a phenomenon in contemporary culture and analyse examples of artists engaging with fandom as the subject or inspiration for their artworks. As a synthesis of art criticism and cultural studies, this thesis explores the impact of contemporary artists' fandom on their depiction of celebrities and the critical reception these artworks receive. In support of this premise, artists' biographies, statements, interviews and portrayals in varied media forums will be interpreted alongside evidence found in the artwork itself.

The following six research questions, presented in three interconnected sets of concerns, will be addressed:

- 1) What is a fan, and what is the cultural importance of fandom in contemporary art and society? Do apparent contradictions and ambiguities in the four principle artists' work discredit or demonstrate their fan identities?
- 2) What scholarly recognized elements of fandom do the main four artists

display in their work? How do the artists reject or embody prevalent cultural stereotypes (particularly pertaining to gender, class and mental health) concerning fans in creating their art?

3) When artists address their subjects using an overtly emotional and subjective aesthetic associated with fandom, what is the effect on an audience's perception of their work and critical interpretation of their art? Do artists' admissions of fan feelings for their subjects influence the evaluation of their work on those subjects?

As scholars in relevant areas of Media Studies and Sociology attest, fandom is a vibrant aspect of contemporary culture and influential in individuals' expression and construction of their identities. It is principally defined in this thesis as "emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text."

<sup>1</sup> However, alternative definitions of fandom are presented and employed to guide an understanding of the artworks discussed. The core elements of fandom engaged are: celebrity identification, parasocial interactions, *amae* and fans' apparently contradictory impulses toward adoration and aggression, objectification and empathy. The templates presented by these components of fandom will be applied to the artists' work. In addition to engaging the qualities of fandom, cultural perceptions of fandom and fans, and an overview of theories about celebrity culture is presented. Not all fans are fans of celebrities. Fandom is also a relevant concept with regard to fans of organized sports, brands, fictional texts and shared activities. However, this thesis focuses only on the sociology, psychology and creative expression of fans of celebrities. The four chosen artists portray recognizable celebrities as the focus of their artistic attention and their work is directed towards analysis and expression of their creative relationship with these celebrities' public images. Scholarship about celebrity culture therefore provides a context for the discussion of fandom. Correspondences between cultural assumptions about the social status, marginalization, mental health and passivity or creativity of fans on the one hand, and the biographies of the four chosen artists on the other, will be analysed as significant factors shaping the production and reception of their art depicting celebrities.

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<sup>1</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 8.

The principal artists whose works and fan identities are analysed are Ryan McGinley (b. Ramsey, New Jersey, 1977-), Elizabeth Peyton (b. Danbury, Connecticut, 1965-), Karen Kilimnik (b. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1955-) and Stella Vine (b. Alnwick, England, 1969). Unlike artists from previous eras, such as the “Pictures Generation” group of artists who appropriated imagery from popular culture with the objective of deconstructing, debating and debunking it, the central artists in this thesis are fans of their source material. These artists function as the art world’s equivalent of *acafans*, a term that will be further defined within the thesis but basically identifies scholars whose auto-ethnographic studies make their self-acknowledgement as fans central to their scholarship. Like *acafans*, McGinley and Peyton are candid about their fan affections for their subjects and their depictions are uncritical, adoring and self-referential.

A chapter is devoted to each of the four main artists. Each of these chapters is split into two sections, with corresponding sub-sections. In each chapter, a brief biography of the artist is provided, followed by a description of the artist’s signature style and discussion of representative artworks. An overview of critical responses to the artist’s work and media persona is provided, as well as a synopsis of the artist’s statements about his or her fan identity, before an original analysis of how fandom is manifested visually and conceptually in the work is presented. In addition to the main four artists’ images of celebrities whom they claim to admire, art works by eleven other prominent late twentieth and early twenty-first century artists are addressed. After the chapter sections that discuss each artist’s work, brief comparative case studies presenting individual artworks or series of works that contrast with or compliment the four central artists’ work and intentions are presented.

The four artists presented as case studies in this thesis create work in a variety of mediums, although (with the exception of McGinley) they are primarily painters. Although creative production by amateur fan artists is referenced in relevant sections of this thesis, the artists addressed for the purposes of comparison to the four principal artists are professionals whose public standing (in the form of mass-media attention, attention by the specialised art press and scholarly significance, when relevant) matches or surpasses the four main artists. The artists presented as comparative case

studies are: Candice Breitz (b. Johannesburg, 1972-), Phil Collins (b. Runcon, 1970 -), Amie Dicke (b. Rotterdam, 1978-), Lucien Freud (Berlin, 1922-London, 2011), Douglas Gordon (b. Glasgow, 1966-), Rodney Graham (b. Abbotsford, Canada, 1949 -), Richard Hamilton (London, 1922-London, 2011), Dawn Mellor (b. Manchester, 1970), Marc Quinn (b. London, 1964-), Banks Violette (b. Ithaca, New York, 1973-), and Andy Warhol (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania 1928- 1987, New York, New York). These artists are referenced thematically, instead of organized chronologically, geographically or by artistic network therefore an artist working in Manhattan in the late nineteen-nineties will be introduced as a counterpoint to an artist working in London as part of the YBA movement because both artists share common subject matter and themes. When useful, comparative artists are paired with the four principle artists with whom they share subjects. For example, Kilimnik's drawings, paintings and video collage depicting the model Kate Moss are presented in comparison with portraits of Moss by Freud, Dicke and Quinn. Because Moss's celebrity status is high-profile in America and England, and the same images of her circulate in both contexts, regional location does not necessarily define the nature of fans' engagement with her image. Accordingly, the differences between an artist who paints a celebrity from life and artists who appropriate or depict publically accessible, mass-produced, images of her are more immediately relevant than geographical and generational factors. For example, while Quinn created work about Moss in London, as part of the YBA climate where the sarcastic appropriation of pop-culture material was common, this thesis argues that his work expresses fandom and not cynicism.

The contrasting case-studies are intended to document the prevalence of celebrity imagery in contemporary art, present alternative conceptual approaches to representing celebrities and fandom, and support the central premise of this thesis – that the four main artists use their fandom as a form of self-portraiture and their overt expression of their emotional investment in mass-media material has been mishandled by the critical community.

The chapters that discuss the principal artists are ordered according to a spectrum graduating from McGinley whose portraits of fellow Morrissey fans present a form of fandom that is culturally considered psychologically healthy to Vine, whose fan identity and painting embody negatively charged cultural concerns about fandom.

Besides their status as representatives of cultural and conceptual concerns about fandom, the main criteria for selecting McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine, rather than other possible subjects, is that each publically acknowledges being a fan, visually represents the celebrities he or she admires and expresses gradations of ambivalence and complexity in his or her depiction of those celebrities. The artists' prominence in the contemporary artworld and related cultural forums grants them exposure and experience with both fame and fandom, which informs their art and identities as fans. Although McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine are singled out for intensive analysis, all of these artists discussed in this thesis are not only doing interesting work artistically, that work presents expansive concerns about the nature and function of fans and celebrity in wider culture. Tensions between the artists' personal, subjective, responses to celebrities and celebrity culture as a subject for artistic investigation enliven their art. The principal distinction between the four principle artists and the comparison artists is the degree to which a subjective first-person perspective dominates and guides their artwork or is obscured through their aesthetic and conceptual choices.

McGinley's portraits of Morrissey fans initially appear journalistic before his expressions of empathy, established through his eloquent use of color and selection of subjects, demonstrate his status as a fellow fan. In contrast, Kilimnik and Peyton are critically perceived as painting and drawing celebrities in a similarly adoring, girlish, naïve style. The primary difference identified in public responses to their artworks is that Peyton's paintings are seen as idealizing her subjects while Kilimnik's artworks leave audiences with a greater feeling of unrest. However, critics question both artists' sincerity and ask whether they are cynically masquerading as fans or producing art that is genuinely impulsive, emotionally unquestioning, obsessive and effusive. Kilimnik's work evokes the disquieting possibility that her fandom tips towards fanaticism. The art, and the scant appearance of her own commentary in public forums devoted to artists' voices fit within the stereotype of an anti-social, obsessive fan whose fascination with celebrities fulfills needs that cannot be met with real-life interpersonal relationships. Yet these elements are overlooked when critics engage with Peyton's portraits. This thesis will explore correspondences with both artists' works and evaluate how their public identities influence interpretation of their art and fan expression. Furthering these themes are paintings by Vine which connect

her personal feelings of culpability for celebrities' destructive experiences with fame and her adoration of certain celebrities who she perceives as embodying identities similar to her own.

In summation, the purpose of this thesis is to evaluate how fandom manifests itself in the four core artists' work, whether fan feelings are discernible in their artwork and how admissions of fandom, whether through artists' public declarations or evidence in their art, influence critical interpretation of art and public perception of the artists themselves. This thesis argues that artists whose work and public personae comply with stereotyped conceptions about fandom and fans encounter criticism and engender particular critical concerns based on popular misconceptions about fans and the nature of fandom. These misconceptions pertain to public perception of fans as passive and uncritical towards the media they admire, regressed and immature in their psychological development and potentially suffering from anti-social pathology. Fandom is also negatively perceived in regards to gender and class connotations. The artists whose work embodies strong fan identities, because of their aesthetic style and focus on the emotional, subjective, aspects of fandom have their work and public identities interpreted based upon cultural concerns about fandom. In contrast, artists who employ aesthetics masking the mechanisms of fandom in their art, or represent celebrities without expressing or having fan feelings for their subjects, are perceived differently. The work of these artists contributes vivid insight into fans' motivation for grafting aesthetic impulse and emotion onto accomplishments, culturally constructed images, social signifiers and personal tribulations of notable strangers.

## **Stars in Their Eyes: Contemporary Artists' Expressions of Fandom and How Fan Identities Influence Art**

Short Abstract

Hilary 2015

DPhil, Lady Margaret Hall

Ana Finel Honigman

Fandom is, as scholars in relevant areas of Media Studies and Sociology attest, a vibrant aspect of contemporary culture and influential in individuals' expression and construction of their identities. This thesis examines and endeavours to challenge how fandom, defined as "emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text,"<sup>2</sup> is conceived and received in contemporary art. It addresses misconceptions about art by four artists who explicitly express their fan identities in their artwork and examines how a finer understanding of fandom can enrich contemporary art discourse and illuminate the artists' works.

Bringing together the fields of art criticism and cultural studies, the thesis explores the impact of contemporary artists' fandom on their depiction of celebrities and the critical reception these artworks have received. The principal artists whose works and fan identities are analysed are: Ryan McGinley (b. Ramsey, New Jersey, 1977-), Elizabeth Peyton (b. Danbury, Connecticut, 1965-), Karen Kilimnik (b. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1955-) and Stella Vine (b. Alnwick, England, 1969). In addition to these, art works by eleven other prominent late twentieth and early twenty-first century artists are presented as revealing contrasts.

These artists, the principal artists and their comparisons, all are not only doing something interesting artistically; their work presents different approaches to expansive concerns about the nature and function of fans and celebrity in wider culture. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to evaluate how fandom manifests itself in artists' work, whether fan feelings are discernible in their artwork and how admissions of fandom, either through artists' public declarations or evidence in their art, influence critical interpretation of art and colours public perception of the artists themselves.

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<sup>2</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*, 8.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sociologist Cornel Sandvoss, in his 2005 study of fandom, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*, argues that contemporary identity is expressed, understood and constructed through media consumption.<sup>3</sup> This thesis transposes Sandvoss's argument into the arena of contemporary art in order to explore fandom in the work of late twentieth and early twenty-first century artists. It examines how Ryan McGinley (b. Ramsey, New Jersey, 1977-), Elizabeth Peyton (b. Danbury, Connecticut, 1965-), Karen Kilimnik (b. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1955-) and Stella Vine (b. Alnwick, England, 1969) produce portraits of celebrities that are ultimately revelatory forms of self-portraiture. These artists are not only doing something interesting artistically; their work also presents expansive concerns about the nature and function of fans and celebrity in wider culture. As a synthesis of art criticism and cultural studies, this analysis explores the impact of contemporary artists' self-reflective engagements with their own emotionally invested media consumption on their depiction of celebrities and the critical reception these artworks receive – as well as evaluating what insights into fandom can be gleaned by a greater understanding of these artists' works.

The core elements of fandom engaged throughout this thesis are celebrity identification, parasocial interactions, *amae* and fans' apparently contradictory impulses toward adoration and aggression, objectification and empathy. The thesis evaluates how artists' declarations of fandom influence and enrich the production and the reception of their art, how their personal biographies affect their fandom and critical reception of their work, and how the mechanisms of fandom function in their art. In this context, the recently developed sociological field of Fan Studies provides a conceptual framework for engaging with artwork. It will be shown that artists whose work and public *personae* coincide with stereotyped conceptions about fandom and fans encounter criticism and engender specific critical concerns based on popular misconceptions about fans and the nature of fandom. In contrast, artists who employ aesthetics masking the mechanisms of fandom in their art, or represent celebrities without expressing or having fan feelings for their subjects, are perceived differently.

The most obvious point of contrast would be with the preceding generation of artists who looked at pop culture critically and were aligned with the post-modernist

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<sup>3</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*.

investigation of hierarchies of taste and mass-market aesthetics.<sup>4</sup> The exemplary group in this regard were those artists in the 1980s collectively referred to as “the Pictures Generation,” which included Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Richard Prince, Sherrie Levine and Jack Goldstein, and exemplified the ethos, aesthetics and formalistic approach of post-modernism’s relationship with pop-culture.<sup>5</sup> As art historian Douglas Crimp identified when he curated the group show “Pictures” in 1977, these artists primarily used photography, silk-screen and other copying techniques to re-contextualise and collage appropriated mass media imagery with the intention of criticising or deconstructing pop-culture source material.<sup>6</sup> Work by the Pictures Generation artists established a tradition of critical, even cynical, artistic engagements with mass media references. The artists discussed in this thesis are different. Their approach towards mass media material is primarily appreciative, although it is also complex. They are fans of their source material instead of critics. The precedent established by the Pictures Generation influences how their work is interpreted but it will be shown that cultural perceptions of fandom beyond contemporary art discourse also impact the artists’ critical reception. In addition to distinctions in intent and purpose, the artists in this thesis differ from their predecessors because of their material relationship with their source material. Among the artists presented as case study comparisons to the central artists, a few directly appropriate pre-existing mass media material – in the form of doctored source material such as magazine pages and actors’ publicity stills. However, the central artists do not directly lift material from mass culture (with the exception of one video collage by Kilimnik). Instead, they create unique works either recording or interpreting pop culture material, in a sense creating portraits of mass media material. Therefore, their work is not literal appropriation but relates to the interests and strategies presented by appropriation artists.

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<sup>4</sup> L. Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989); J. Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-modernism* (London: Psychology Press, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> D. Crimp, ‘Pictures,’ *October*, (1979): 75-88; D. Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009); M. Lobel, ‘The Pictures Generation’, *Artforum* (March 2009): 250-271; H. Cotter, ‘Framing the Message of a Generation’, *The New York Times* (12 January 2009), 1-25.

<sup>6</sup> D. Crimp, *Pictures*, (New York: Committee for the Visual Arts, Inc., 1977).

## Context

Modernism has an extensive record of engagement with mass culture.<sup>7</sup> This section provides an overview of prominent examples of writing in contemporary art criticism that address relationships between art and celebrity culture.

Whilst much work has been done over the last few years on Fan Studies, as will be presented in detail in Chapter One, to date there has been little work within contemporary art theory and critique analysing fandom. Some scholars have examined the impact of fame and sub-cultural celebrity status in relation to the reception of certain artists' work. Examples include art historian Margaret Lindauer's examination of how popular mythology concerning Frida Kahlo and interpretations of her paintings treat the artist as a celebrity,<sup>8</sup> as well as the 2005 Tate Britain exhibition that contextualised Joshua Reynolds's eighteenth-century practice and portraits within a social environment with a developed conception of celebrity.<sup>9</sup> *Art stars* – i.e. artists who become celebrities in their own right – and the market's influence on the development of contemporary art are also central to British theorist Julian Stallabrass's sharp 1999 critique of contemporaneous British artists who aggressively courted mass media attention.<sup>10</sup> Stallabrass's 2004 deconstruction of the art market's influence on contemporary art includes a criticism of *celebrification* within contemporary art whereby artists attract celebrity treatment from mass media publications and garner celebrity status within the art world.<sup>11</sup> Financial journalist Don Thomson addressed similar issues in his 2012 analysis of the relationship between mass media and the contemporary art economy. Thomson creates a portrait of an art economy distorted by superficial attention on gossip and sales rather than

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<sup>7</sup> Examples include: A. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Columbus: Indiana University Press, 1986); R. S. Keller, 'Modernism and Mass Culture', *American Literary History* 13, no. 2 (2001): 343-353; A. Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-1959* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> M. A. Lindauer, *Devouring Frida: The Art History and Popular Celebrity of Frida Kahlo* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> M. Postle, ed., *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> J. Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: British Art in the 1990s* (New York: Verso, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> J. Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

creative content.<sup>12</sup> The conservative American art critic Roger Kimball made arguments comparable to Stallabrass's in a series of essays and reviews assembled and published in 2003, entitled *Art's Prospect: The Challenge of Tradition in an Age of Celebrity*.<sup>13</sup> Kimball equates the word "celebrity" with a distillation and undermining of art's intellectual integrity, although artists' intellectual or emotional engagement with celebrity as a subject does not factor into his critique.

These examples of arguments by theorists speaking from very different ideological vantage points, with Kimball as a reactionary art critic and Stallabrass representing a primarily progressive Marxist interpretation of contemporary art, postulate a similar binary opposition between celebrities and fans, artists and audiences, without exploring the meaning invested in art by artists who are both fans of celebrities and themselves celebrities within the art world. Expanding on those themes are two texts that examine relationships between artists and celebrity mass culture. These are Isabelle Graw's 2009 *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture* and John Walker's 2003 *Art and Celebrity*. Graw's study of the contemporary art economy explores the symbiotic relationships between art production, art's meaning and the international art market. Celebrity culture is not Graw's central concern, despite its reference in her book's title. Rather, she investigates the dissolution of boundaries between artists' "rhetorical rejection of the market" and the successful marketing of artworks, using celebrity as a measure for material and social values.<sup>14</sup> Instead of discussing artists' depictions of celebrities, Graw engages with artworks as celebrity objects, tracing the development of the celebrated or celebrified art object that garners significant critical attention and monetary value through its fame. Fandom does not arise in Graw's study until she addresses Warhol's work towards the middle of her book. In the introduction to a section titled, "Warhol Lives: Between Star and Celebrity," Graw recognises Warhol as a "productive fan... a theorist and practitioner of celebrity culture."<sup>15</sup> In her engagement with Warhol, she creates a

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<sup>12</sup> D. Thompson, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art* (London: Aurum Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> R. Kimball, *Art's Prospect: The Challenge of Tradition in an Age of Celebrity* (Washington, DC: Ivan R. Dee, Inc, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> I. Graw, *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009), 9.

model for interpreting an artist as both a fan, involved in a professional form of textual productivity, and a public figure which is of direct relevance to the analysis in this thesis.

A broader survey of artists creating works about celebrity and the relationship between the contemporary art world and celebrity culture is Walker's *Art and Celebrity*.<sup>16</sup> It is the most substantial roster of contemporary artists who create art about celebrities, and it analyses the pervasiveness of this theme from the late nineteenth-century until the book's publication in 2003. Although Walker addresses prominent theories in Celebrity Studies and hypothesizes motives for artists' participation in celebrity culture and their responses to it, his interest is in celebrity and his mention of artists' fan feelings is fleeting. When discussing artists depicting celebrities, he isolates specific celebrity subjects such as Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diane and combines work about these figures which range from naturalistic portraiture, to homage, to critical commentary. But he primarily portrays artists' aspirations to become celebrities and to interact with celebrities as desires for the lifestyle and status that celebrities embody, rather than expressions of artists' individual fan identities. The artists Walker discusses, who aspire to become celebrities and who have their own fans while remaining fans of other celebrities, often want to maintain distance between themselves and the celebrities they admire. Walker observes that some artists, whom he does not name, "greatly admired" or are "obviously intrigued" by media personages, but he does not delve into the reasons for and outcomes of these emotional attachments.<sup>17</sup>

In some instances, Walker discredits the possibility that fan attachments might motivate artists to represent celebrity subjects. Notably, when Walker writes about Peter Blake's paintings from the 1960s of Elvis's fans and Blake's self-portrait in the guise of an obsessed fan, Walker posits that "... in Blake's case, he hoped that his images would appeal to the pop star's fans as did the publicity stills and fan

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<sup>15</sup> I. Graw, *High Price*, 178.

<sup>16</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 105.

magazines they habitually collected.”<sup>18</sup> Walker does not, however, explain why he doubts the possibility that Blake might have a personal attachment to Elvis, which would render his image of himself holding an Elvis fan magazine and wearing memorabilia badges as a straightforward, rather than ironic, self-portrait. Instead of addressing this literal interpretation of the image, Walker only indirectly mentions that “while some fine artists pretend to be fans of the celebrities they represent, others are genuine followers,” without articulating his rationale for distinguishing between true and ironic fans.<sup>19</sup> Equally, when addressing critical responses to Elizabeth Peyton, whom he acknowledges as a fan of her many subjects, he does not consider how her fandom might enhance or alter the meaning of her art.<sup>20</sup> Walker’s refusal to engage artists’ fandom might signal suspicion about fandom as a legitimate motive for making art and an acceptance of the cultural dismissal of fans that will be addressed in Chapter One.

An exception in Walker’s book is his acknowledgment that the British Pop art painter Pauline Boty, who received significant public attention as an “art star” before her 1966 death, “greatly admired [Marilyn] Monroe and was upset by news of her death.”<sup>21</sup> Yet he does not suggest how Boty’s portraits of Monroe were influenced by her emotional attachment to the star, or differed from her portraits of celebrities with whom she felt less intense affinities. In contrast, feminist art historian Sue Tate asserts that Boty “deeply identified with Monroe” and that the identification influenced her work and self-presentation in mass media press interviews and art world forums.<sup>22</sup> Tate discovers an “empathetic tactility” in Boty’s depictions of Monroe, which recognise Monroe’s socio-political significance within the context of her era but also expresses a personal emotional connection beyond objective representation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 107.

<sup>19</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 139.

<sup>20</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 116-9.

<sup>21</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 105; K. Minioudaki, ‘Pop’s Ladies and Bad Girls: Axell, Pauline Boty and Rosalyn Drexler’, *Oxford Art Journal* 30, no. 3 (2007), 402-430.

<sup>22</sup> S. Tate, “‘Forward Via a Female Past’: Pauline Boty and the Historiographical Promise of the Woman Pop Artist,” in A. M. Kokoli, ed., *Feminism Reframed: Reflections on Art and Difference* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2008), 177-205.

<sup>23</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 184.

Despite overlooking the profound impact of artists' possible fan feelings, Walker contributes an analysis of art's relation to celebrity culture that is useful for understanding artists who have achieved significant recognition within and beyond the art world. He presents the financial, social and creative exchanges between artists and celebrities as interconnected categories that function as part of the art world system. However, his premise positions art's relationship to celebrity as slightly suspect, potentially corrupting or distracting artists from more worthy interests and aspirations. This belief is demonstrated by beginning his introduction with a quotation from an art publication asserting that art since the 1970s has become "hard to distinguish from advertising."<sup>24</sup>

Walker presents three distinctive ways that art and celebrity connect, and although these points are useful for illuminating the relationship between artists and celebrity culture, therefore are delineated here, his book neglects to engage artists' fandom. Walker identifies the relationship between art and celebrity as functioning through patronage (which often involves socialising), celebrities producing art and artists creating art about celebrities. Walker reports that, as members of a wealthy elite, some celebrities collect art and thereby influence artists' marketability, notoriety and reputations.<sup>25</sup> Influential publications, ranging from mainstream newspapers to specialised art magazines and websites, therefore emphasise the activities of celebrity collectors over less recognisable names. This publicity enhances the credibility of celebrity collections and empowers celebrities as tastemakers. These dynamics are richly textured and can intensively impact contemporary art.

The text which best addresses artists working as fans is art theorist Catherine Grant's article 'Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art'.<sup>26</sup> This essay is significant for this thesis because Grant explores how artists express their admiration, as fans, through their art. In her essay, Grant addresses the negative cultural connotations of fandom as anti-intellectual and

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<sup>24</sup> J. Bergman-Carton, 'Media: Like an Artist', *Art in America* 81, no.1 (Jan. 1993), 36.

<sup>25</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 32-37.

<sup>26</sup> C. Grant, 'Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art', *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 2 (2011), 265-286.

excessive, and rebuts them by proposing that fandom is a source of intellectual inspiration for artists developing their own voice and concern by paying homage to their predecessors. As Grant writes, “Rather than an appropriation strategy that privileges irony and distance, the action of a fan focuses on attachment and desire.”<sup>27</sup> This formulation, as well as its application in her analysis of particular works, serves as a template for evaluating the artists in this thesis.

Grant’s article takes as its focus artists who are fans of other artists, and does not consider artists who are fans of creative people, or public figures, in areas outside fine art creation and the art community. Thus, for the artists she considers Grant quite rightly connects the concept of a “fan scholar” to artists whose function “incorporates the artist as an art historian, as well as an art historian as a fan.”<sup>28</sup> Where her work is of most relevance to the artists addressed in this thesis is in her evaluation of fandom as an emotional attachment. Building on her work, I will argue that the different nature of the fan object – other artists vs celebrities – creates considerable differences between the artists in her study and those discussed in this thesis. Where her focus on artists who are fans of artists allows for a precise examination of a specific sub-cultural context, an important element in this thesis is the contrast between work by artists within the art world and the textual productivity of their peers in open fan communities. Nevertheless, the nature of the work that Grant explores is similar to the art discussed in the following chapters, in that she examines artists whose work is humorous, self-conscious and emotionally motivated. What is more, she acknowledges that elements in this art are ambivalent and conflicted – such as London-based American artist Oriana Fox’s combination of references to popular women’s mass culture and feminist art history<sup>29</sup> – and that contradiction is a native element to fandom that proves, rather than undermines, artists’ identities as fans. This thesis seeks to develop a similar line of argument while extending the analysis to a wider range of subject matter.

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<sup>27</sup> C. Grant, ‘Fans of feminism’, 269.

<sup>28</sup> C. Grant, ‘Fans of feminism’, 269.

<sup>29</sup> C. Grant, ‘Fans of feminism’, 269-271.

## **Aims**

Fandom's complexity and contradictions will be explored in this thesis to demonstrate how conceptions about fandom color interpretations of work by artists who depict celebrities they admire. It is hoped that the original contribution of this thesis will be a synthesis of conceptual frameworks from emerging critical fields dealing with contemporary celebrity and fans, and application of the resulting framework to artists whose work has not previously been examined in this light. By analysing the four chosen artists' work and comparing it with work by artists who depict celebrities without reflecting on their own fan identities, this thesis will apply Sandvoss's premise to contemporary art and argue that fandom is a valid and valuable conceptual basis for creating and engaging with art.

This thesis is premised on John Fiske's interpretation of fandom as the active claiming of ownership by an audience of mass-produced cultural products through their creative appropriation, which is a concept engaged in Chapter One and evoked elsewhere in this thesis.<sup>30</sup> Writing in the 1980s, Fiske analysed fans' art and fiction through the lens of Marxism and presupposed a power dichotomy between fans and cultural producers. In Fiske's interpretation, fans use the creative appropriation of material to oppose the ownership by franchises and corporations of the characters and storylines those entities created.

The following six research questions, presented in three interconnected sets of concerns, will be addressed:

- 1) What is a fan, and what is the cultural importance of fandom in contemporary art and society? Do apparent contradictions and ambiguities in the four principle artists' work discredit or demonstrate their fan identities?
  
- 2) What scholarly recognized elements of fandom do the main four artists display in their work? How do the artists reject or embody prevalent cultural stereotypes (particularly pertaining to gender, class and mental health) concerning fans in creating their art?

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<sup>30</sup> J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 47.

3) When artists address their subjects using an overtly emotional and subjective aesthetic associated with fandom, what is the effect on an audience's perception of their work and critical interpretation of their art? Do artists' admissions of fan feelings for their subjects influence the evaluation of their work on those subjects?

### **Definitions**

In addition to *fandom*, this thesis will employ terms with special meanings within the contemporary art context. The central definition of *fandom* employed in this thesis derives from Sandvoss, who describes it as an “emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text.”<sup>31</sup> Further theories of fandom and the term's epistemological roots will be presented in Chapter One to address the ambivalences and ambiguities in the work of artists depicting celebrities of whom they claim to be fans. Yet, as Sandvoss states, “even if specific assumptions regarding what and who a fan is may vary, it seems safe to assume that we can associate fandom with a particular form of emotional intensity or ‘affect’.”<sup>32</sup> This thesis explores additional elements in fandom such as identification, paradoxical feelings of aggression and adoration, and correspondence with cultural assumptions about the sociological identity of fans, yet the principal component of fandom, as seen in work by McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine, is an emotional rather than an objective engagement and investment with a celebrity's public image.

When prejudices are referenced, the primary dichotomy addressed in this thesis is identified by sociologist Joli Jensen. She distills these issues as:

Apparently, the real dividing line between aficionado and fan involves issues of status and class, as they inform vernacular cultural and social theory. Furthermore, the Joyce scholar and the Barry Manilow fan, the antique collector and the beer can collector, the opera buff and Heavy Metal fan are differentiated not only on the basis of the status of their desired object, but also on the supposed nature of their attachment. The obsession of a fan is deemed emotional (low class, uneducated) and therefore dangerous, while the obsession of the aficionado is rational (high class, educated) and therefore benign, even worthy.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 8.

<sup>32</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 6.

Jensen's observation provides a model for discussing contrasts between the fannish expressions of the four main artists and work by the comparison artists who present their subject matter as aficionados or objective commentators.

The term *artworld* is employed in this thesis to describe the transnational professional community of artists and the network of established entities that support the production, presentation and reception of artworks. Sociologist Howard Becker, writing in the 1970s, describes the *artworld* as consisting of the institutions, organisations, industrial field structures and social networks that surround the art object.<sup>34</sup> Beyond that definition, this thesis recognises the artworld as an industry with standards and conventions that dictate who is considered a member of the community and who is marginalised as an outsider. Sociologist Sarah Thornton defines the artworld as “a loose network of overlapping subcultures...[it] is a sphere where people don't just work but reside full-time. It is a ‘symbolic economy’ where people swap thoughts and where cultural worth is debated rather than determined by brute wealth.”<sup>35</sup> Thornton's definition provides insight into why commercially successful artists are marginalised because their fandom is critically disparaged. This thesis seeks to contribute to the dialogue about the cultural worth of celebrity imagery by McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine within the artworld, although some of them have been commercially validated and accorded art star status.

*Art star* is a term frequently employed in this thesis. Art historian John Walker writes that “art stars” are “famous beyond their profession or the art world.”<sup>36</sup> A more practical definition which is employed in this thesis is provided by cultural anthropologist Stuart Plattner, who defines an art star as one who is simply

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<sup>33</sup> J. Jensen, ‘Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization’, in L. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (London: Routledge, 1992), 21.

<sup>34</sup> H. Becker, ‘Art Worlds and Social Types’, *American Behavioral Scientist* 19, no. 6 (1976), 703-717.

<sup>35</sup> S. Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (London: Granta Books, 2012), 1.

<sup>36</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 193.

“represented in the national media,” beyond the specialised art press.<sup>37</sup> Artists whose work is written about in mass media publications over a course of years and presented to wide audiences in international contexts can be referred to using this term. This thesis will use this term as an indicator of subcultural celebrity, meaning that artists addressed as *art stars* are prominently known within the art community as successful artists who have been introduced to wider audiences through the mainstream media.

Specific terms directly related to fandom, which will be applied to artworks in this thesis, will be introduced and defined in Chapter One. These terms include: *amae*, *aca-fan* and *Slash Fiction*. They provide conceptual frameworks for understanding and appreciating the nature of fandom and fans’ creative involvement with celebrity culture.

### **Scope and Setting**

The artists discussed in this thesis are presented as case studies exemplifying different attitudes and approaches to fandom and the expression of fan feelings. The four chosen artists and the artists selected as comparisons were chosen because they are particularly interesting examples which throw light on the issues related to fandom and fans’ identities. Thus the main criteria for selecting McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine, rather than alternative examples, is that each publically acknowledges being a fan, visually represents the celebrities he or she admires and expresses gradations of ambivalence and complexity in his or her depiction of celebrities.

In addition to expressing salient elements of fandom, McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine have been also selected over lesser-known artists producing similar work because they have achieved significant professional status within the international art community. Although amateur fan art is referenced in this thesis, examples are not provided or engaged with in detail, but rather the focus is upon work that is critically acknowledged by the contemporary art community. The core artists’ biographical details, such as their geographical location and other defining attributions, were secondary considerations to their transnational visibility in the international art scene

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<sup>37</sup> S. Plattner, *High Art Down Home: An Economic Ethnography of a Local Art Market* (Chicago, 1996), 3.

and the content of their work. Although self-expression is central to the artists' interpretations of celebrity culture, this thesis acknowledges the commodity culture within which the artists produced their work, and connections between artists' prestige, the financial value of their works and critical attention directed to commercially successful artists. Because the art world functions as a subculture, the principle artists discussed in this thesis can themselves qualify as subculture celebrities whose stature within the art world is affected by the status and cultural significance of their celebrity subjects.<sup>38</sup> The prices of these artists' works vary. Vine, for example, began her career by selling a painting for £600 in 2004, whereas a pencil portrait by Kilimnik of the French actress Catherine Deneuve sold a year later at auction for \$19,662.<sup>39</sup> Despite this range, the artists discussed in this thesis are each part of a global marketplace for contemporary art and function simultaneously as fans and as subculture celebrities.

All four artists produced the artwork that will be discussed at the end of the 1990s and in the early years of the twenty-first century. They primarily depict North American and British celebrities by employing consistent visual strategies. Three work consistently in the same medium. McGinley is a photographer, while Peyton and Vine primarily produce drawings and paintings. Only Kilimnik works in multiple mediums. All four interpret, rather than appropriate, pre-existing mass media material, and the three painters exclusively paint publically accessible source material instead of depicting subjects from life. Of the four artists, three are female and two are publically known as not heterosexual. None hold graduate degrees in art. In addition, all four received significant media attention and commercial success to qualify them as subcultural celebrities in their own right. Celebrities are the principal subjects for three of the four main artists chosen as the focus of this thesis. However, to understand how fandom is both a personal and professional identity for these artists, this thesis will also discuss relevant critical reactions or critical silence toward comparable works by the artists depicting wholly personal subjects such as relatives and friends.

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<sup>38</sup> D. Hebdige, 'Subculture: The Meaning of Style', *Critical Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1995), 120-124.

<sup>39</sup> Dio: [findartinfo.com/search/listprices](http://findartinfo.com/search/listprices) (accessed: 19 March 2014).

Eleven artists are presented as comparative case studies: Candice Breitz (b. Johannesburg, 1972-), Phil Collins (b. Runcon, 1970 -), Amie Dicke (b. Rotterdam, 1978-), Lucien Freud (Berlin, 1922-London, 2011), Douglas Gordon (b. Glasgow, 1966-), Rodney Graham (b. Abbotsford, Canada, 1949 -), Richard Hamilton (London, 1922-London, 2011), Dawn Mellor (b. Manchester, 1970), Marc Quinn (b. London, 1964-), Banks Violette (b. Ithaca, New York, 1973-) and Andy Warhol (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania 1928- 1987, New York, New York). They have been selected because they address the same or similar subjects as the core four. However, they produce work that either aesthetically masks their fandom, or they are not self-acknowledged fans of their celebrity subjects matter. In each case study, artists' statements about their emotional investment in their subject matter will be discussed alongside representative examples of the critical response their work receives and analyses of the work itself. Whenever possible, artworks have been selected for these sections because they feature celebrity subjects in the four central artists' oeuvres. For example, three artists whose work involves depictions of the British model Kate Moss were selected as counterpoints to art by Kilimnik because she frequently expresses her fan attachment to Moss in drawings, paintings and a video collage.

## **Methodology**

The artworks presented in this thesis are interpreted using a combination of methods. They are engaged, iconographically and formally, to discuss how artists' fandom is expressed, suppressed or denied through aesthetic choices, such as Peyton's use of soft brushwork and Vine's selection of saccharine colors and acrylic paint. The artworks are also interpreted through the interdisciplinary application of theories from Fan Studies, which explain how fandom is represented and evocatively conveyed in the artwork. Finally, information about artists' biographies and the artists' statements about their work contribute to an understanding of the art discussed. The artists' intentions will receive special critical attention for the reason that fandom necessitates a fan's willingness to participate, and the history of fandom implies that fans' self-identification is an important element of their identities. Therefore this study accepts artists' self-identification as fans as a foundation for examining whether evidence of their fandom can be interpreted in their work. The artists selected as the focus of this thesis have all, in some way, declared their fandom in public forums and express their fandom iconographically. When an artist's imagery appears to undermine his or her

statements about being a fan, as in the case of Vine, Fan Studies provides a template for evaluating whether and why these apparent contradictions are not actual conflicts.

In addition to interpreting the work of the core artists and their comparative case studies, this thesis includes analyses of material in the popular press such as artists' profiles, reviews and interviews. Two significant elements of this original material are artists' statements about their artistic intentions and their analysis of their own works. Artists' biographies are presented as shedding light on their work because the artists' personal identification with their celebrity subjects is evident in their art and is addressed in their personal statements about their art. Biographical material also influences the critical reception of these artists' work, as it fuels prevailing cultural stereotypes about fans, particularly pertaining to gender and sexuality.

Methodologically, original interviews with the artists and observations of their physical work – made through visits to studios and exhibitions – have been fundamental source material for this thesis. Use of artists' statements about their work can be considered problematic source material since, as art historian Jason Gaiger argues, a complete correspondence between “agency and philosophical understanding” can not be assumed because people's motives and their actions do not always correspond, in any context.<sup>40</sup> However, artists' statements are included and critically engaged in this thesis because a self-acknowledged and proclaimed fan identity was a requirement for each of the four artists selected as core subjects in this thesis. Fandom requires active emotional investment in mass media material; therefore artists cannot be fans without self-awareness. In some instances, artists are evasive about presenting their work as expressions of fandom or they articulate ambivalence about having fandom read into their art. These instances will be evaluated in context.

### **Thesis Structure**

In order to understand and appreciate these artists' work and how fandom effects their art-making processes and artworks, Chapter One will address the first research question:

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<sup>40</sup> J. Gaiger, *Aesthetics & Painting* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 7.

What is a fan, and what is the cultural importance of fandom in contemporary art and society? Do apparent contradictions and ambiguities in the central four artists' work discredit or demonstrate their fan identities?

It begins with the history, meaning and cultural significance of celebrities. It then provides historical, psychological, sociological and cultural context for engaging with fans and fandom and this thesis's principle artists' work and motivations. In order to evaluate the artists' shared concerns and themes, it introduces conceptual models from Fan Studies and Celebrity Culture Studies. This preliminary chapter provides detailed definitions for celebrities and fans, historical overviews of both groups and influential theories about the psychological and sociological significance of celebrities and fans in contemporary Western culture. It addresses how fans' textual productivities evince both their acceptance of and resistance to popular culture, as well as their capacity to shape cultural products, prejudices and concerns within popular culture, academia and the art world. These prejudices are presented as factors that complicate artists' admission of fan feelings, and color critical responses to their work.

Following the review of literature addressing celebrity and fandom in Chapter One, the second two research questions are:

What scholarly recognized elements of fandom do the main four artists display in their work? How do the artists reject or embody prevalent cultural stereotypes (particularly pertaining to gender, class and mental health) concerning fans in creating their art?

When artists address their subjects using an overtly emotional and subjective aesthetic associated with fandom, what is the effect on an audience's perception of their work and critical interpretation of their art? Do artists' admissions of fan feelings for their subjects influence the evaluation of their work on those subjects?

These questions are engaged in relation to each of the four main artists' work. A chapter is devoted to each of these central artists. Each of these chapters is split into two sections, with corresponding sub-sections. The artists are discussed in the

following order: McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine. In each chapter, a brief biography of the artist is provided, followed by a description of the artist's signature style and discussion of representative artworks. An overview of critical responses to the artist's work and media persona is provided, as well as a synopsis of the artist's statements about his or her fan identity, before an original analysis of how fandom is manifested visually and conceptually in the work is presented.

After the sections that discuss each artist's work, brief comparative case studies presenting individual artworks or series of works that contrast with or compliment the four core artists' work and intentions are presented. These contrasting case studies are intended to document the prevalence of celebrity imagery in contemporary art, present alternative conceptual approaches to representing celebrities and fandom, and support the central premise of this thesis – that the main four artists use their fandom as a form of self-portraiture and their overt expression of their emotional investment in mass media material has been mishandled by the critical community.

The chapters' order is structured as a spectrum representing fan feelings that range from explicit adoration to apparent aggression. McGinley's autobiographical series, *Irregular Regulars*, epitomises the adoring artistic idiom. This decade-long project documented McGinley's attendance at Morrissey concerts in a series of photographs, and functions as this study's most uncomplicated and overt presentation of fandom. Following the discussion of *Irregular Regulars* is an analysis of paintings by Peyton, who depicts male rock stars as romanticised objects of worship. Peyton and Kilimnik are American painters who attracted wide media attention in the 1990s for their apparently obsessive depictions of fashion models and rock stars. Although they share similarities on the surface, Kilimnik's self-conscious conflation of her own identity with her depictions of fashion models stimulates feelings of unease in reviewers. While macabre motifs are implied in Kilimnik's art, this thesis concludes with Vine, whose paintings of celebrities explicitly include signs of violence. Although ordered as a progression from signs of adoration to aggression, this thesis argues that these elements are not binary opposites, and that their different treatments in the artists' work have been misinterpreted, as they all express the vital aspects of fandom to be divulged in the forthcoming Chapter One

The conclusion will return to the research questions and explain how the material presented in the central chapters demonstrates those concerns. In summation, the conclusion will respond directly to the points raised in this introduction while showing linkages between the chapters. The research questions will place fandom in context.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **What is a Fan: Fan Culture, Fan Studies and the Context of Artists' Fandom**

In order to answer the questions ‘what is a fan?’ and ‘what is the cultural importance of fandom in contemporary art and society?’ this literature review is divided into two sections, the first of which defines celebrity. Celebrities are not the only objects of fans’ attention: alternative objects include fictional texts, communities and consumer brands.<sup>41</sup> However, this thesis focuses on artworks by artists who are fans of individual celebrities. The field of celebrity studies therefore provides a conceptual basis and vocabulary via which to address particular celebrities’ semiotic and symbolic functions for the artists who seek to represent them in their artwork and creates a foundation for discussing these artists’ fandom. Following this overview of celebrity, as a concept and social phenomenon, this chapter will explore the theoretical, psychological, sociological and historical contexts of fandom as well as present evidence of cultural opposition to twentieth- and twenty-first century fans. Theories for why fandom is stigmatised even though, as media scholars Sean Redmond and Su Holmes write, ‘We have all been, or are, a fan of someone’, will be explored because they will be applied to interpretations of the core artists’ critical reception in the four forthcoming chapters.<sup>42</sup> Fans’ creative appropriation of mass media material, in the form of fan fiction, and academics’ auto-ethnographic studies of fandom, known as aca-fandom, will be presented in the concluding portion of this chapter, as will comparisons with artwork by Ryan McGinley, Elizabeth Peyton, Karen Kilimnik and Stella Vine.

## **CELEBRITIES AND CELEBRITY STUDIES: THE OBJECTS OF FANDOM**

### **History of Celebrity Studies**

Celebrity and fandom have been subjects of scholarly attention in related fields of psychology, sociology and media studies since the 1940s; however, celebrity studies only evolved into a distinctive academic subject in the 1960s.<sup>43</sup> Examples of early

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<sup>41</sup> Examples of these forms of fandom include: A.M. Levin, F. Beasley and T. Gamble, ‘Brand Loyalty of NASCAR Fans Towards Sponsors: the Impact of Fan Identification’, *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship* 6, no. 1 (2004), 11–21; D.N. Bristow and R.J. Sebastian, ‘Holy Cow! Wait ‘Til Next Year! A Closer Look at the Brand Loyalty of Chicago Cubs Baseball Fans’, *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 18, no. 3 (2001), 256–275; J. Tulloch and H. Jenkins, *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Doctor Who and Star Trek* (New York: Routledge, 1995); M. Jindra, ‘Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon’, *Sociology of Religion* 55, no. 1 (1994), 27–51.

<sup>42</sup> S. Redmond and S. Holmes, eds., *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), 4.

<sup>43</sup> S. Redmond and S. Holmes, eds., *Stardom and Celebrity*, 5.

scholarship include studies conducted in the 1940s and 1950s of fans of detective stories and popular cinema.<sup>44</sup> Stemming from this work, by the 1960s academic investigation into celebrity evolved from film studies' curricula into its own discipline in the social sciences.<sup>45</sup> The following material derives from this discipline and presents some of the principle figures' central theories from within the field.

### **Purpose of Celebrity in Contemporary Society**

While primarily grounded in cultural and media studies, the scope of celebrity studies' discourse about celebrity and the interdisciplinary exploration into the ramifications and reach of celebrity in contemporary culture are wide.<sup>46</sup> In a 2010 examination of celebrity studies as a discipline, cultural studies scholar Graeme Turner notes the rise in scholarly interest in celebrity's impact on wider cultural and subcultural concerns, such as audiences' consumer habits, personal behaviours and political activities.<sup>47</sup> At the time of Turner's analysis, some work in celebrity studies included papers discussing the impact of celebrity on the formation of identity and the risk of suicide among a celebrity's fans.<sup>48</sup> The impact of celebrity activism on political change has also been charted within academic contexts,<sup>49</sup> while religious studies scholars have addressed the relationships among celebrity, idolatry and worship in England and America.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, British and American psychologists have questioned the potentially harmful correlations between fandom and individuals'

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<sup>44</sup> E. Bergler, 'Mystery Fans and the Problem of "Potential Murderers"', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 15, no. 2 (1945), 309; M. May and F. Shuttleworth, *The Social Conduct and Attitudes of Movie Fans* (New York: Arno Press, 1933).

<sup>45</sup> S. Redmond and S. Holmes, eds., *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9; Thomas, A. and Martin Barker, M., eds., *Contemporary Hollywood Stardom*, (Los Angeles: Bloomsbury USA Academic, 2003), 5.

<sup>46</sup> G. Turner, 'Approaching Celebrity Studies', *Celebrity Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010), 11–20.

<sup>47</sup> G. Turner, 'Approaching Celebrity Studies', 12.

<sup>48</sup> L. Koo and G. Martin, 'Celebrity Suicide: Did the Death of Kurt Cobain Influence Young Suicides in Australia?', *Archives of Suicide Research* 3, no. 3 (1997), 187–198.

<sup>49</sup> C. Lahusen, *The Rhetoric of Moral Protest: Public Campaigns, Celebrity Endorsement, and Political Mobilization* (Boston: 76 vols. Press, 1996).

<sup>50</sup> J. Maltby, J. Houran, R. Lange, D. Ashe and L.E. McCutcheon, 'Thou Shalt Worship No Other Gods—Unless they are Celebrities: the Relationship between Celebrity Worship and Religious Orientation', *Personality and Individual Differences* 32, no. 7 (2002), 1157–1172.

body image and self-worth<sup>51</sup> and scholars in different disciplines have explored the relationship between the mainstream acceptance of cosmetic surgery and publicised celebrity physical alteration.<sup>52</sup>

In response to this vast range of subjects connected to celebrity, Turner proposes that celebrity be considered not merely as a phenomenon, but ‘as representation, as discourse, as an industry and as a cultural formation’.<sup>53</sup> The artists in this thesis respond to celebrity on these levels but primarily as ‘representation’, in the sense that their identification with particular celebrities is founded on their acknowledgement of celebrity as representing particular personality attributes, social concerns and identities. Turner argues that celebrity is a subject worthy of scholarly investigation because celebrities embody social values, especially values about identity concerns such as race, gender, nationality, sexuality and status.<sup>54</sup> He argues that a central social function of celebrity is that celebrities’ visibility can destabilise conservative conventions and draw progressive attention towards the invisibility of disenfranchised groups. Sociologist Julian Stringer concurs that, ‘because they are placed according to the divisions of gender, race, class, nationality and sexuality, stars can embody or redefine values invested in specific social types’.<sup>55</sup> Studies such as historian Bennetta Jules-Rosette’s 2007 biography of Josephine Baker, the African-American entertainer and civil rights activist during the early twentieth century, for example, argue that individual celebrities can galvanise public conversations about identity and identity representation.<sup>56</sup> In these studies, celebrities reflect and influence historical changes in values and perception. This argument is relevant to the artists addressed in this

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<sup>51</sup> J. Maltby, D.C. Giles, L. Barber and L.E. McCutcheon, ‘Intense Personal Celebrity Worship and Body Image: Evidence of a Link among Female Adolescents’, *British Journal of Health Psychology* 10, no. 1 (2005), 17–32.

<sup>52</sup> V. Swami, R. Taylor and C. Carvalho, ‘Acceptance of Cosmetic Surgery and Celebrity Worship: Evidence of Associations among Female Undergraduates’, *Personality and Individual Differences* 47, no. 8 (2009), 869–872.

<sup>53</sup> G. Turner, ‘Approaching Celebrity Studies’, 13.

<sup>54</sup> G. Turner, ‘Approaching Celebrity Studies’, 13.

<sup>55</sup> J. Stringer, ‘The Smiths: Repressed (but Remarkably Dressed)’, *Popular Music* 11, no. 1 (1992), 15–26.

<sup>56</sup> B. Jules-Rosette, *Josephine Baker in Art and Life: the Icon and the Image* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

thesis because they select celebrities owing to their symbolic representation and create art that engages with celebrities' influence on themselves as well as upon wider society.

Celebrity itself can become a figure's narrative, as Turner argues that the cultural process through which an individual is turned into a celebrity can also result in the person becoming a symbol of enfranchisement, empowerment, objectification and even abjection.<sup>57</sup> Media scholar Christopher Smit presents Britney Spears as a figure created and moulded to symbolise fame's destructive potential.<sup>58</sup> Cultural theorist P. David Marshall extends this premise beyond disfranchised identities by arguing that celebrities can become emblems of the fundamental or universal states of being.<sup>59</sup> Media scholar Anthony Elliot argues that the late John Lennon, for example, 'became strangely representative of loss in our culture', which demonstrates Marshall's point since mourning and death are fundamental and universal.<sup>60</sup> Vine's paintings of Princess Diana and work by artists who depict Kurt Cobain are examples in this thesis of the observation that Elliot makes about Lennon. According to these theories, celebrity in the twentieth century serves profound, not superficial, social functions.

### **History of the Contemporary Concept of Celebrity**

The history of celebrity itself, as a concept and as a category of persons possessing cultural influence, is the subject of scholarly debate. Literary scholar Leo Braudy, for instance, provides a context for contemporary celebrity by defining the concept of fame as separate from that of celebrity. Braudy traces the word celebrity itself, he explains, as deriving from the Latin *celebritas*, which translates as 'multitude' or 'fame'. From this starting point, he analyses the connections between fame, religious faith, heroism and idolatry throughout cultural history. As the concept of celebrity evolved, 'fame' grew to signify renown, respect and an established reputation earned

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<sup>57</sup> G. Turner, 'Approaching Celebrity Studies', 13.

<sup>58</sup> C.R. Smit, *The Exile of Britney Spears: a Tale of 21st Century Consumption* (London: Intellect Books, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> P.D. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame and Contemporary Culture* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>60</sup> A. Elliott, 'Celebrity and Political Psychology: Remembering Lennon', *Political Psychology* 19, no. 4 (1998), 833–852.

by merit, whereas ‘celebrity’ describes a more ephemeral connotation.<sup>61</sup> Recognition rather than renown defines a celebrity. Thanks to the contributions of Braudy and Marshall, the terms ‘fame’ and ‘celebrity’ are not treated as interchangeable in celebrity studies. However, these terms are often used synonymously in popular culture and this thesis will discuss figures whose talents evoke respect alongside figures whose fame is not based on traditional merit because the artists discussed are fans of both types of celebrities.<sup>62</sup>

The actual origins of contemporary celebrity, according to historian Daniel Boorstin’s established theory, began in 1850. He specifies this date as the pivotal point in the development of celebrity, arguing that the Graphic Revolution created a cultural transition from admiring fame to manufacturing celebrity through the collaboration of eager audiences and accommodating media outlets.<sup>63</sup> Sociologist Chris Rojek similarly argues that celebrity began during the Enlightenment as an outgrowth of a developing culture that privileged ‘taste’ as a mark of recognition.<sup>64</sup> Rojek’s historical analysis ties the culture of the eighteenth century to that of the twentieth century, which literary critic Leo Lowenthal describes. Writing in the 1960s, Lowenthal observes that ‘[contemporary] heroes are a lot of guys who like or dislike highballs, cigarettes, tomato juice, golf and social gatherings’, thereby reducing celebrity primarily to the consumption and promotion of leisure products.<sup>65</sup> Lowenthal makes this statement in the context of a critique of celebrity culture in his era, which he perceived as eroding cultural credibility by promoting superficial distinctions of taste above intellectually rigorous accomplishments. This equation of celebrity with vapid advertising remains a salient concern for today’s critics of celebrity culture, who worry that ‘fame’ and ‘celebrity’ are confused in contemporary culture.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> P.D. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 5.

<sup>62</sup> C. Kurzman et al., ‘Celebrity Status’, *Sociological Theory* 25, no. 4 (2007), 352.

<sup>63</sup> D.J. Boorstin, *The Image: Or What Happened to the American Dream* (London: Penguin Books, 1962), 67.

<sup>64</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 102.

<sup>65</sup> L. Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society* (Englewood Cliffs: Transaction Publishers, 1961), 135.

<sup>66</sup> L. Barron, ‘The Habitus of Elizabeth Hurley: Celebrity, Fashion, and Identity Branding’, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 11, no. 4 (2007), 443–461.

## Categories of Contemporary Celebrity

Beyond cults of taste and tastemakers, celebrity culture has developed a hermetic logic described by Boorstin as offering fame to someone ‘known for his well knownness’.<sup>67</sup> Boorstin explains that celebrities function as ‘pseudo-events’, generated by the mass media to stimulate audiences and potential consumers without narrative justification. Boorstin’s critique identifies those aspects of celebrity that accelerated in the late twentieth century with the advent of new media outlets and forums for individuals to become short-lived objects of mass attention.<sup>68</sup> He is concerned that the cultural promotion of mitigated constructs, in the form of celebrities’ personae, is driving society to lose touch with authentic experiences.<sup>69</sup> Turner and other scholars who view current celebrities as tools for fans to understand and articulate their authentic identities and experiences of their worlds contest this assessment.

Boorstin’s assessment of celebrity culture is a base for later critiques. For example, in the early twenty-first century, Rojek developed the term *celetoid* to refer to figures attracting fleeting recognition or notoriety. For example, he describes pop culture figures as ‘accessories of cultures organised around mass communication and staged authenticity’.<sup>70</sup> A celetoid, as defined by Rojek, is a minor public figure whose public identity is designed to be temporary or an ‘accessory to celebrity’ or a ‘media-generated, compressed, concentrated form of attributed celebrity’, such as a lottery winner, one-hit wonder or reality show personality.<sup>71</sup> The art world equivalents to these one-hit wonders might include artists whose debut shows receive media attention but whose subsequent work passes unnoticed. This notion of celebrity as something easily obtainable but fleeting influences how some artists relate to their

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<sup>67</sup> D. Boorstin, ‘From Hero to Celebrity: the Human Pseudo-Event’, in P. D. Marshall, ed., *The Celebrity Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 73.

<sup>68</sup> S. Holmes, and D. Jermyn, eds., *Understanding Reality Television* (London: Psychology Press, 2004).

<sup>69</sup> D. Boorstin, *The Image*, 77–117.

<sup>70</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 20.

<sup>71</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 18.

own relative fame and will be engaged in the upcoming discussion of Vine's depictions of figures known to their fans through scandals enacted on reality television.<sup>72</sup>

Rojek acknowledges that celestoids comprise only a proportion of the participants in contemporary culture. Beyond this group, he recognises three types of celebrities: ascribed, attributed and achieved. His definitions of these distinct categories are used herein to evaluate artists' depictions of different types of celebrities. 'Ascribed celebrity' is Rojek's term for the biologically inherited status embodied by a monarch or 'Hollywood royalty'.<sup>73</sup> 'Achieved celebrity', which can be viewed as roughly synonymous with fame, is earned through talent and merit, whereas he describes 'attributed celebrity' as 'the result of the concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries'.<sup>74</sup> Rojek's terms dismantle the mystique of celebrity figures and strengthen the reservations articulated by Boorstin and his peers about the value of celebrities as objects of attention because two of the three categories eliminate the celebrity's agency in obtaining recognition because his or her status was either inherited or assigned.

### **Qualities of Contemporary Celebrity: Extraordinary Ordinarity**

Media scholar Richard Dyer identifies a dichotomy in media depictions of celebrities as simultaneously relatable and exemplary. He investigates this paradox and the sociological function of celebrity by parsing a common narrative presented in the media about celebrities – the tale of discovery. He writes, 'One of the problems in coming to grips with the phenomenon of stardom is the extreme ambiguity/contradiction ... concerning the stars-as-ordinary and stars-as-special. Are they just like you or me, or do consumption and success transform them into something different?'<sup>75</sup> This question haunts fandom since, as will be seen, fans simultaneously crave identification with celebrities while worshipping them. The

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<sup>72</sup> G. Turner, 'The Mass Production of Celebrity "Celestoids", Reality TV and the "Demotic Turn"', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (2006), 156.

<sup>73</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 17.

<sup>74</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 18.

<sup>75</sup> R. Dyer 'Stars as Images', in P.D. Marshall, ed., *The Celebrity Culture Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 158.

artists discussed in this thesis investigate this issue in different ways. Dyer's observation about this tension within celebrity is relevant because fandom is defined, as will be seen, by fans' identification with celebrities.

Marshall supports Dyer's identification of this apparent paradox in celebrity by describing celebrities as 'hyper-versions that express the potential and possibilities of the individual'.<sup>76</sup> Marshall proposes that celebrities embody their audiences' optimism about the malleability of their identities. Celebrities serve as physical incarnations of the characteristics and narratives that their audiences hope to emulate. However, celebrities' accessibility, as relatable icons, is an inescapable aspect of their allure.

### **Subcultural Celebrity and Art Stars**

While their subjects primarily represent broad pop culture forms of celebrity, the artists discussed in this thesis are also celebrities within a relatively limited orbit defined by their subcultural capital. 'Subcultural capital' is a term developed by sociologist Sarah Thornton as a measure of 'hipness'. It is a subgenre of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' or 'knowledge that is accumulated through upbringing and education which confers social status'.<sup>77</sup> In the context of Thornton's early research, based on nightclub cultures and counter-cultures, 'subcultural capital' is that which 'confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder'.<sup>78</sup> In the context of this thesis, the relevant beholders are other members of the art community. The subcultural capital held by artists in this thesis varies and includes recognition by audiences outside the art subculture, as well as financial success and measures of accomplishment that confer other forms of status on individuals, including Bourdieu's 'cultural capital'. 'Subcultural capital', however, is the designation ascribed to the artists because the art world functions as an insular community with its own norms and hierarchy, therefore becoming a fully functional subculture.

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<sup>76</sup> P.D. Marshall, 'Introduction', in P.D. Marshall, ed., *The Celebrity Culture Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 4.

<sup>77</sup> S. Thornton, 'The Social Logic of Subcultural Capital', in K. Gelder and S. Thornton (eds.), *The Subcultures Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), 185.

<sup>78</sup> S. Thornton, 'Social Logic', 186.

Their level of recognition serves significant purposes by granting the artists in this thesis insight into the mechanisms of fame and demonstrating their relevance as creative figures. While they have benefitted from recent trends in contemporary culture, they are also established in their careers beyond the initial bloom of attention accorded to young, emerging artists by the youth-oriented mass media and specialist press. They are ‘achieved celebrities’. Their responses to the mass media and their own fans contribute to their feelings of identification or mythmaking with celebrity figures. Refusals on their part to engage with approachable stars, beyond appropriating generally accessible mass media material, are considered in this thesis as conscious responses to their subcultural celebrity, their conception of fandom and the value that they place on their fandom. Although these artists have experiences as fans and ‘art stars’, their primary relationship with fame is as fans, and their work explores the cultural and psychological connotations of their fandom.

## **FANS’ AND FAN PRACTICES**

### **Epistemology and Meaning of the Word ‘Fan’**

While the word ‘celebrity’ has nuances that Rojek develops, it is generally used to reference someone in the public eye. ‘Fan’, however, is broadly used in contemporary culture as a colloquial statement of admiration.<sup>79</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary*, however, narrows the definition of a fan to:

... a fanatic; in modern English (orig. U.S.) ... regular supporter of a (professional) sports team; hence, a keen follower of a specified hobby or amusement, and gen. an enthusiast for a particular person or thing.<sup>80</sup>

While the body of this definition generally supports the casual use of the term and its use in this thesis, the first entry above incorporates the accompanying prejudices about fans that continue to colour associations with the term and the people whom it describes – including, this thesis argues, the artists in this thesis.

Scholars Catherine Grant, Beth Jacobson and Joanne Mackellar claim that ‘fan’ is a

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<sup>79</sup> C. Harris, *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Fan’ entry, *Oxford English Dictionary* (2013), accessed 4 November 2014 at [www.oed.com/view/Entry/68000?rskey=aAq9uN&result=2#eid](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/68000?rskey=aAq9uN&result=2#eid).

derivative of ‘fanatic’, as listed in the *O.E.D.*<sup>81</sup> However, celebrity studies scholar Ellis Cashmore proposes that ‘fan’ derives from ‘fancy’, a collective name given to patrons of prize fighting in the early nineteenth century, which does not imply potential pathology.<sup>82</sup> Cashmore cites otherwise forgotten novels as the sources that coherently establish a precedent for fans’ ardent attention to and collective financial support of celebrities. Sports historian David Shulman supports the connection between ‘fanatic’, ‘fancy’ and ‘fan’ by citing nineteenth-century criticism of baseball’s ardent followers by professionals in the sport.<sup>83</sup>

However, the perceived relationship between fandom and fanaticism in popular culture developed early in the term’s history. Fan studies scholar Joli Jenson writes, ‘The fan is consistently characterised (referencing the term’s origins) as a potential fanatic’.<sup>84</sup> Shulman describes sports professionals referring to fans as ‘cranks’ and ‘fanatics’ in 1887 news articles.<sup>85</sup> In these allusions, fans are viewed as overly zealous and regarded with mild contempt.<sup>86</sup> However, the validity of equating fans with fanatics is questionable, especially since fans’ allegiance to specific texts is not always uncritical or consistent. Nevertheless, these connotations have shaped the history of fandom.<sup>87</sup>

The association between fans and fanaticism, as will be seen later in this chapter, persists. Conceptual video artist and Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller, for example, presents a colloquial conception of fandom: ‘I am a fan of lots of things but I am not

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<sup>81</sup> C. Grant, ‘Fans of Feminism: Re-Writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art’, *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 2 (2011), 265; B. Jacobson, ‘The Social Psychology of the Creation of a Sports Fan Identity: A Theoretical Review of the Literature’, *Social Psychology* 5, no. 2 (1979), accessed 1 January 2014 at [www.athleticinsight.com/Vol5Iss2/FanPDF.pdf](http://www.athleticinsight.com/Vol5Iss2/FanPDF.pdf); J. Mackellar, ‘Dabblers, Fans and Fanatics: Exploring Behavioural Segmentation at a Special-Interest Event’, *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 15, no. 1 (2009), 5–24.

<sup>82</sup> E. Cashmore, *Celebrity Culture* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 79.

<sup>83</sup> D. Shulman, ‘On the Early Use of Fan in Baseball’, *American Speech* 71, no. 3 (1996), 328–331.

<sup>84</sup> J. Jensen, ‘Fandom as Pathology’, 9.

<sup>85</sup> D. Shulman, ‘On the Early Use of Fan’, 328.

<sup>86</sup> D. Shulman, ‘On the Early Use of Fan’, 328.

<sup>87</sup> M. Hills, ‘Patterns of Surprise: the “Aleatory Object” in Psychoanalytic Ethnography and Cyclical Fandom’, *American Behavioral Scientist* 48, no. 7 (2005), 801–821.

that obsessive'.<sup>88</sup> As an artist who takes fandom as a subject for his multimedia art, Deller is familiar with the concept's complexity, and his use of the word 'obsessive' represents an entrenched cultural perception of fans.<sup>89</sup> Despite the tenuous linkage between fascination with a celebrity and excessive delusions, Hills concurs with Deller that the definition of a fan in general culture carries certain stereotypes of obsessiveness.<sup>90</sup>

Despite its use as a pejorative term, 'fan' quickly transitioned into a term of self-identification for creative communities organised around productive engagement with different forms of popular culture. In fan studies scholar Francesca Coppa's 2006 history of media fandom, she explains that the vocabularies, cultural infrastructure and practices that remain active in postmodern fan communities were developed by science fiction fans in the 1930s.<sup>91</sup> Coppa references a fiction magazine from the late 1920s as an early forum for fans to communicate with each other and cultivate a specialist vocabulary to describe their avid interest in the magazine's material.<sup>92</sup>

### **The History and Language of Fan Communities**

Organised fan communities developed in the 1920s, according to a 1996 study of the subject, although fan publications only began to be produced in the 1930s.<sup>93</sup> These publications were early examples of fans' creative appropriation of mass media products and they set precedents for appreciating artists' creative interpretations of their admired media texts. These publications demonstrate fans' creative responses to

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<sup>88</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'An Interview with Jeremy Deller', *International Sculpture Center Blog*, accessed 4 December 2013 at [blog.sculpture.org/2013/12/04/jeremy-deller/#more-3065](http://blog.sculpture.org/2013/12/04/jeremy-deller/#more-3065).

<sup>89</sup> J. Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology: the Consequences of Characterization', in L. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (1992), 9.

<sup>90</sup> M. Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: 2004), ix.

<sup>91</sup> F. Coppa, 'A Brief History of Media Fandom', *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006), 42.

<sup>92</sup> S. Perkins, 'Science fiction fanzines', accessed 2 January 2014 at [www.zinebook.com/resource/perkins/perkins2.html](http://www.zinebook.com/resource/perkins/perkins2.html).

<sup>93</sup> J.M. Verba, *Boldly Writing: a Trekker Fan and Zine History 1967-1987* (Minneapolis: FTL Publications, 1996), 1.

media and refute negative stereotypes of fans as being antisocial, which will be discussed further in this chapter.

Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist and conservative anti-comic pundit during the 1970s, details four phases in the historical development of fanzines: from (i) sections in commercial science fiction magazines devoted to ongoing dialogues between individual fans, to (ii) the listing of fans' home addresses in these magazines, which encouraged personal exchanges between them, to (iii) the development of organised clubs and conventions, to, finally, (iv) the creation of print publications that were written and published by fans for fellow fans.<sup>94</sup> By the early 1970s, when Wertham was writing his study, fanzine producers had developed a complete lexicon of descriptive language to describe their interests and the functions of their specific publications. Examples of these terms include 'satirezine, humourzine (sic), parody fanzine, reviewzine, rockzine, artzine, Tolkeinzone, articlezine, newszine, strip zine and communicationszine'.<sup>95</sup> Although Wertham compiled his research to argue against fan culture and fan publications, which he perceived as corrosive elements in contemporary culture, eroding the appreciation of 'high art' texts and causing juvenile delinquency, his study of fanzines illustrates fans' creativity, while the names they developed for their publications demonstrate their self-awareness and critical specificity.<sup>96</sup>

Expanding beyond fanzines are fanfic communities devoted to original works of fiction written by fans about the objects of the authors' fandom.<sup>97</sup> This chapter argues that these forms of fans' creative expression are a basis for comparing artists' overtly subjective and occasionally transgressive appropriation of the mass media, since many examples of fanfiction consciously subvert established storylines and

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<sup>94</sup> F. Wertham, *The World of Fanzines* (Carbondale & Evanston: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 34–41.

<sup>95</sup> F. Wertham, *The World of Fanzines*, 36.

<sup>96</sup> B. Beaty, *Fredric Wertham and the Critique of Mass Culture* (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2005); F.M. Thrasher, 'The Comics and Delinquency: Cause or Scapegoat', *Journal of Educational Sociology* 23, no. 4 (1949), 195–205.

<sup>97</sup> R.W. Black, 'Access and Affiliation: the Literacy and Composition Practices of English-Language Learners in an Online Fanfiction Community', *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 49, no. 2 (2005), 118.

conventions within mass-produced texts. In keeping with media scholar John Fiske's concept of fandom, fans' pleasure in creating fanfiction often arises from claiming creative ownership over texts through subversion.

In the context of the epistemology and history of the term 'fan', the development of fan communities, fanzines and fanfiction marked the movement of the term 'fan' from a derogatory description used by insiders within the production process of an object of audience interest to an identity embraced and creatively cultivated by fans themselves. These forms of creative expression also complicate the equating of fans with fanaticism's 'excessive and single-minded zeal', because of fans' irreverent and multidimensional handling of material in their creative endeavours. The proliferation of vocabulary specific to fan subcultures reflects fans' eagerness and ability to engage actively with popular culture texts and rework existing texts into new meanings.

If fandom is not simply fanaticism, then what is it? The following sections examine a range of psychological studies that propose theories of fans' relationships with those celebrities who captivate their attention. Further into this chapter, fanatical forms of fandom and negative manifestations of fan feelings will be examined, but theories about the healthy, normative forms of fandom are first identified. However, an overview of celebrity itself is first needed to establish the broader cultural context of fandom.

### **Nature and Character of Fan Attachments**

Psychologists Ines Schindler, Veronika Zink, Johannes Windrich and Winfried Menninghaus present an interdisciplinary study of the developmental psychological function of adoration in personal and collective ideation.<sup>98</sup> Their study combines approaches from psychology, sociology and media studies. They define adoration as equal to worship, signifying respect, love, tenderness and honour.<sup>99</sup> They identify adoration as 'admiration [that] motivates the internalization and emulation of ideals

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<sup>98</sup> I. Schindler, V. Zink, J. Windrich and W. Menninghaus, 'Admiration and Adoration: Their Different Ways of Showing and Shaping Who We Are', *Cognition & Emotion* 27, no. 1 (2013), 85–118.

<sup>99</sup> I. Schindler et al, 'Admiration and Adoration', 87.

embodied by an outstanding role model'.<sup>100</sup> This constructive emotional attachment is a formative component of fandom and the psychological benefits of fandom that will be discussed later in this chapter.

The phrase 'adoring fans' is a journalistic cliché, yet critical literature in fan studies specifies that adoration is not the only defining element of fandom. Adoration is often complicated by contradictory components. Media scholar Henry Jenkins, for example, writes, 'The fan's response typically involves not simply fascination or adoration but also frustration and antagonism, and it is the combination of the two responses which motivates their active engagement ...'<sup>101</sup> As a forerunner in the field of fan studies, Jenkins's description of fandom's paradoxical nature shapes the writing about fandom.

Media studies scholar Lisa A. Lewis's writing about a fictional fan in the 1983 film *King of Comedy* reflects Jenkins's approach. She describes Rupert, the movie's protagonist, as 'manifest[ing] the underlying frustration, even hostility, characteristic of fan adoration'.<sup>102</sup> Lewis's combination of the negative and aggressive character attributes with the word 'adoration' exemplifies the complicated dichotomy at the core of this thesis. Her description of the film includes the observation that Rupert embodies 'two competing fan impulses, love and hate'.<sup>103</sup> The artists in this thesis will prove the validity of her statement. Fiske reiterates Lewis's assessment of fans' contradictory feelings with the statement, 'The reverence, even adoration, fans feel for their object of fandom sits surprisingly easily with their contradictory feeling that they also 'possess' that object'.<sup>104</sup> Jenkins does not perceive negative emotional responses to media as negations of fandom. Instead, he considers antagonistic

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<sup>100</sup> I. Schindler et al., 'Admiration and Adoration', 85.

<sup>101</sup> H. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), 23.

<sup>102</sup> L. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (London: Routledge, 1992), 156.

<sup>103</sup> L.A. Lewis, 'Something More than Love: Fan Stories on Film', in L. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience*, 151.

<sup>104</sup> J. Fiske, 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom', in L. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience*, 40.

emotional attachments to be creative impetuosity for fans. The artists in this thesis each engage with this complex combination of emotional attachments.

This thesis presents a spectrum of artists, from McGinley, whose depiction of fandom's adoring attributes dominates the narrative of his work, to Peyton, who subtly interweaves negative elements into her otherwise adoring imagery, and it concludes with the overtly complex representation of fandom by Kilimnik and Vine. Their works engage the question, 'what is a fan?' The following section will explore why fans form intricate attachments to celebrities.

### **Psychological Theories of Fandom and Fan Attachment**

In 1956, psychologists Donald Horton and Richard Wohl developed the concept of *parasocial interaction* to explain the emotional pact that fans perceive themselves to have with celebrities despite their inability to interrelate with them personally.<sup>105</sup> These relationships are founded on audiences' familiarity with celebrities' faces and narratives. As Horton and Wohl explain, 'The most remote and illustrious men are met as if they were in the circle of one's peers,' because modern media allow projections of remote figures to enter audiences' private spheres.<sup>106</sup> Television beams famous individuals' faces into audiences' living rooms, establishing a sense of 'face-to-face' intimacy that creates a 'simulacrum of conversation'.<sup>107</sup> Writing about Horton and Wohl in 2009, Graw describes this relationship thus: 'Although they are quite obviously media constructs, celebrities are experienced as real people made of flesh and blood, people we know all too well'.<sup>108</sup> The significant element within Graw's description is 'experienced', which establishes a bridge between fans' knowledge of celebrities as mediated and their fantasy associations with celebrity personae. According to Graw, the fiction of a parasocial bond does not undermine its intensity or satisfaction, although Horton and Wohl are critical of its inherent limitations: '[A fan's] accumulation of knowledge and intensification of loyalty ...

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<sup>105</sup> D. Horton and R. Wohl, 'Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance', *Psychiatry* 19, no. 3 (1956), 215–229.

<sup>106</sup> D. Horton and R. Wohl, 'Mass Communication', 215.

<sup>107</sup> D. Horton and R. Wohl, 'Mass Communication', 215.

<sup>108</sup> I. Graw, *High Price*, 162.

appears to be a kind of growth without development, for the one-sided nature of the connection precludes a progressive and mutual reformulation of its values and aims'.<sup>109</sup>

Studies based on Horton and Wohl discredit this concept of parasocial interactions as static. Psychologists in the 1980s reasoned that fans' emotional bonds with celebrities have evolved and deepened over time.<sup>110</sup> According to these studies of audiences' responses, as celebrities age alongside their audiences, their fans grow to trust and care about them as if they were a friend or family member.<sup>111</sup> For example, Annette Kuhn's study of female fans whose admiration for film stars developed throughout their lives revealed that fans' nostalgic reminiscences of the texts they claim to adore are largely subjective and that fans remember their experiences with the texts rather than the details of the texts themselves. For self-identified fans, plots and characters can be confused or forgotten, but they recall where they sat and what they wore when watching a particular film that they claim to adore.<sup>112</sup> Fans absorb images of celebrities into their personal narratives, while maintaining their awareness of the division between fantasy and reality and retaining a solid sense of personal identity.

Another theory exploring fans' emotional attachments to celebrities is expressed by fan studies scholars' application of Donald Winnicott's concept of 'transitional objects' to their understanding of fans' use of celebrity references as bridging fantasies and social expressions of their cultural identities. Denise D. Bielby, C. Lee Harrington and Kaja Silverman draw upon Winnicott's studies of children using playthings to develop early understandings of the distinctions between fantasy and

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<sup>109</sup> D. Horton and R. Wohl, 'Mass Communication', 218–219.

<sup>110</sup> E. Berscheid and E. Walster, *Interpersonal Attraction (Topics in Social Psychology 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)* (North Carolina: Longman Higher Education, May 1978), accessed 28 March 2014 at [www.sexarchive.info/BIB/HTF/IA.htm](http://www.sexarchive.info/BIB/HTF/IA.htm).

<sup>111</sup> R.B. Rubin and M. McHugh, 'Development of Parasocial Interaction Relationships', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 31, no. 3 (1987), 279–292.

<sup>112</sup> A. Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London: IB Tauris Publishers, 2002), 43.

reality, themselves and others and communal versus personal narratives.<sup>113</sup> As Harrington and Bielby write in their application of the ‘transitional object’ model to a study of soap opera fans, ‘a key form of pleasure is rooted in activities that allow individuals to challenge the boundaries between internal and external realities’.<sup>114</sup> This theory provides the context for fans’ use of their celebrity identification to develop their public and social selves.

In contrast to this portrait of fans integrating celebrity images into their personal frames of reference, scholars in the 1970s hypothesised that parasocial interactions fulfil a deficit for individuals who suffer from feelings of social alienation, social anxiety and loneliness.<sup>115</sup> The underlying assumption motivating these theories is that fans replace absent legitimate personal relationships with fictional parasocial interactions. However, later studies searching for corollaries between individuals described as ‘lonely’ and their emotional investment in television news anchors, a demographic of television performer perceived as steady and trustworthy, find no empirical connection between antisocial behaviour and fandom.<sup>116</sup> Studies of soap opera fans, also conducted in the 1970s, identify companionship and personal identification as equal drivers in fans’ development of parasocial interactions with the genre’s fictional characters. However, this study proposes that soap opera characters captivate viewers’ interest because their dramatic emotions reflect viewers’ attitudes towards situations, behaviours and emotional responses in their own lives, rather than replacing personal relationships entirely.<sup>117</sup> This theory, alongside Kuhn’s findings,

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<sup>113</sup> See: D.D. Bielby and C.L. Harrington, *Soap Fans: Pursuing Pleasure and Making Meaning in Everyday Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); K. Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>114</sup> D.D. Bielby and C.L. Harrington, ‘Introduction: New Directions in Fan Studies’, *The American Behavioral Scientist* 48, no. 7 (March 2005), 133.

<sup>115</sup> K.E. Rosengren, K. Roe and I. Sonesson, *Finality and Causality in Adolescents’ Mass Media Use* (Media Panel Rep. No. 24) (Lund Sweden: University of Lund, 1983); K.E. Rosengren and S. Windahl, ‘Mass Media Consumption as a Functional Alternative’, in D. McQuail, ed., *Sociology of Mass Communications* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), 166–194; K.E. Rosengren, S. Windahl, P. Hakansson and U. Johnsson-Smaragdi, ‘Adolescents’ TV Relations: Three Scales’, *Communication Research* 3 (1976), 347–365.

<sup>116</sup> A.M. Rubin, E.M. Perse and R. Powell, ‘Loneliness, Parasocial Interaction, and Local Television News Viewing’, *Human Communication Research* 12, no. 2 (1985), 155–180.

<sup>117</sup> J.G. Blumler, J.R. Brown and D. McQuail, ‘The Television Audience: a Revised Perspective’, in D. McQuail, ed., *Sociology of Mass Communications: Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 135–165.

creates a basis for understanding the chosen artists' statements about identification as motivation for their art production.

Parasocial interactions affect viewers' social and psychological lives. An article written in 2009 by psychologist David Giles proposes that parasocial relationships can provide psychologists with useful models of interpersonal relationships. Rather than being interpreted as a perversion or replacement of missing interpersonal relationships, Giles argues that fandom can illuminate the nature of relationships between two active participants.<sup>118</sup> Giles writes about perceived romantic relationships between fans and fictional characters or celebrities' personae. Although he ostensibly presents parasocial relationships as positive influences on fans' lives, Giles's attitude towards them seems to be conflicting, as he writes that some fans' inability to distinguish between fictional parasocial relationships and personal relationships is 'inevitable'.<sup>119</sup> Although he acknowledges that case studies of erotomania, the clinical term for these types of illusory relationships, predate mass communication, Giles still treats pathology as an organic undercurrent in fandom.

In response to assumptions such as Giles's, psychologists Lynn E. McCutcheon, Rense Lange and James Houran research varying degrees of celebrity worship to distinguish empirically between pathological and non-pathological forms of fandom.<sup>120</sup> This study will be frequently cited to assert distinctions between the four core artists' differing forms of fandom. For their study, McCutcheon, Lange and Houran define non-pathological 'low levels of worship' as individual activities such as reading about celebrity gossip or news, while more advanced forms of fandom involve forming collective attachments, such as joining fan clubs or fan communities. In their estimation, the highest and most potentially problematic form of fandom is 'characterized by a mixture of empathy with the celebrity's successes and failures, over-identification with the celebrity, compulsive behaviours, as well as obsession

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<sup>118</sup> D. Giles, 'Parasocial Interaction: a Review of the Literature and a Model for Future Research', *Media Psychology* 4, no. 3 (2002), 279–305.

<sup>119</sup> D. Giles, 'Parasocial Interaction', 305.

<sup>120</sup> L.E. McCutcheon, R. Lange and J. Houran, 'Conceptualization and Measurement of Celebrity Worship', *British Journal of Psychology* 93, no. 1 (2002), 67–87.

with details of the celebrity's life'.<sup>121</sup> This form of fandom fuses the fictions of parasocial interactions. McCutcheon, Lange and Houran propose that high levels of 'psychological absorption' lead to delusions that manifest themselves as forms of addiction and obsessive thinking.<sup>122</sup> However, their study raises questions about whether fandom exacerbates these mental illnesses or whether a celebrity is simply a convenient object for a pathological fan's delusions.

The McCutcheon, Lange and Houran study provides a framework for interpreting the intense and potentially problematic engagement with celebrities by the artists addressed in this thesis. They express a range of attachments to, or 'worship' of, their celebrity subjects. Some of their articulated attachments and the expression of their attachments fall on the higher 'worship' end of this scale, such as the indication of 'over-identification with celebrities' in the work of Kilimnik and Vine. However, they work apart from the fan communities described by sociologists as highly specialised and organised subcultures.<sup>123</sup>

### **Artists and *Amae*: Elective Distance between Fans and Celebrities**

Although the aforementioned studies are foundational to my project, it is crucial to acknowledge the cultural relativity of attitudes towards fandom. The studies mentioned thus far were conducted in North America and Europe, and they are therefore comparable in location to the artists addressed in this thesis. However, studies conducted in Asia complicate assumptions about fandom's inherent, or as media scholar David Giles writes 'inevitable', qualities.<sup>124</sup> Because the principal artists discussed in this thesis have achieved commercial success and cultural status as 'art stars', affording them plausible opportunities to work directly with the celebrities whom they admire and depict them from life, as some of their case study counterparts

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<sup>121</sup> L.E. McCutcheon, R. Lange and J. Houran, 'Conceptualization and Measurement', 67-87.

<sup>122</sup> L.E. McCutcheon, R. Lange and J. Houran, 'Conceptualization and Measurement', 67.

<sup>123</sup> C. Amesley, 'How to Watch Star Trek', *Cultural Studies* 3, no. 3 (1989), 323-339, accessed 27 December 2011 at [www.10.1080/09502388900490221](http://www.10.1080/09502388900490221); N. Watson, 'Why We Argue about Virtual Community: a Case Study of the Phish.Net Fan Community', in S. Jones (ed.), *Virtual Culture: Identity and Communication in Cybersociety* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 102-32; H. Jenkins, "'We Sing": Filking and the Social Construction of the Science Fiction', in L. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience*, 208-236.

<sup>124</sup> D. Giles, 'Parasocial Interaction', 279-305.

do, this thesis faces the challenge of theorising about their elective distance from their celebrity sources. This elected distance is central to their fan identities since, as Sandvoss identifies, ‘fandom is based on the strict separation and distancing [sic] between fan and object of fandom’.<sup>125</sup> The Japanese concept of *amae* provides a conceptual model to describe artists’ reluctance to develop interpersonal relationships with celebrities that might jeopardise the authenticity of their fandom.

In Japan, fans function as ‘part of a culturally affirmed dyad of dependency (*amae*)’.<sup>126</sup> Christine Yano’s 1997 study of fandom in Japan, for example, concludes that ‘not only is being a fan affirmed in Japan, it is culturally lauded. To be a fan is to exemplify cultural values of loyalty and dedication’.<sup>127</sup> While fandom takes many forms in Japanese society, including the active reinterpretation of texts akin to fanfiction in the West, *amae* provides a word for the ‘unique media relationships’ described by McQuail, Blumler and Brown. No equivalent term in English validates the pleasures of a satisfying hierarchical exchange between fan and star.<sup>128</sup> Japanese psychoanalyst Takeo Doi defines *amae* as submission or ‘willful subordination’.<sup>129</sup> However, *amae* is not a wholly selfless state. Doi compares it to children’s self-conscious, enhanced dependence performed to evoke parents’ protectiveness.<sup>130</sup> Japan scholar Frank A. Johnson’s definition of the term as ‘indulgent dependence’ is most applicable to the dynamic between a fan and a celebrity.<sup>131</sup> Rather than portraying fans as antisocial, the concept of *amae* structures the economic and attention exchanges between fans and stars as symbiotic in that the two need and validate each other. In this system, a medium in which fans embody and mimic their admired stars,

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<sup>125</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 95.

<sup>126</sup> C. Yano, ‘Charisma’s Realm: Fandom in Japan’, *Ethnology* 36, no. 4 (1997), 336.

<sup>127</sup> C. Yano, ‘Charisma’s Realm, 336.

<sup>128</sup> L.R. Stickland, *Gender Gymnastics: Performers, Fans and Gender Issues in the Takarazuka Revue of Contemporary Japan* (Perth: Murdoch University PhD diss., 2004).

<sup>129</sup> T. Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1973), 168.

<sup>130</sup> L. Takeo, ‘The Japanese Patterns of Communication and the Concept of *Amae*’, *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 2 (1973), 180–185.

<sup>131</sup> F.A. Johnson, *Dependency and Japanese Socialisation: Psychoanalytic and Anthropological Investigations into *Amae** (New York: New York University Press, 1993), ix.

such as karaoke, can be interpreted as a form a ‘surrogacy’ through which ‘the fan becomes a private surrogate of the star, singing his or her songs, sharing vicariously in his or her fame or triumphs ... she who publically takes on the responsibilities and obligations of the star, upholding the star’s image’.<sup>132</sup>

This concept illuminates the emotional bonds and boundaries expressed by Peyton, Kilimnik and McGinley in their art since these three artists have achieved art star status and have access to personal interactions with celebrities but prefer to maintain their distance and produce work from mass media sources in order to retain the pleasures of fandom. The dynamic initially seems to be free from pathology since it recognises reality more accurately than parasocial interactions based on imagined friendships or fantasies of reciprocated romance. However, in cultures in which individuality is prized and submissiveness regarded negatively, ‘surrogacy’ supports unflattering stereotypes of fandom as a ‘set of psychological symptoms of a presumed social dysfunction’.<sup>133</sup>

### **History of Fan Studies and Aca-Fans**

As the above references to theories by scholars of fan studies demonstrate, it is the interdisciplinary and cross-national exploration of fan practices, theories of fandom and the influence of fans on other areas of culture.<sup>134</sup> Before fan studies were established as a distinct subject of scholarship, scholars who approached the subject from an ethnographic position treated fannish enthusiasms and subcultures as cultural phenomena. It merges audience studies, media studies and consumption studies to address how fandom relates to the issues of ‘identity, performance, practice, genre, gender, sexuality, self, affect, race, ethnicity, and nationalism’.<sup>135</sup> A primary contribution that separates fan studies from studies of fans in other disciplines is the emphasis on fans’ own voices, including the development of hybrid fan/academic

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<sup>132</sup> F.A. Johnson, *Dependency and Japanese Socialisation*, xix.

<sup>133</sup> J. Jensen, ‘Fandom as Pathology: the Consequences of Characterization’, in L. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience*, 10.

<sup>134</sup> C.L. Harrington and D. Bielby, ‘Introduction: New Directions in Fan Studies’, *The American Behavioral Scientist* 48, no. 7 (March 2005), 799.

<sup>135</sup> C.L. Harrington and D. Bielby, ‘Introduction’, 799.

identities in which scholars position their own fandom as central to their practice and authority.<sup>136</sup>

Scholarship that directly incorporates fans' voices developed in the early 1990s.<sup>137</sup> The collective research into fan studies offers fans active engagement as creative respondents, activists and critics towards the media that they admire and often emanates from fan academics, whose own fandom blurs the boundaries between scholar and subject.<sup>138</sup> To remedy the lack of fan voices, in 1992 Jenkins proposed the hybrid term 'aca-fan' for auto-ethnographic fan scholarship, which he developed as a subgenre of media scholarship.<sup>139</sup> The motivation for creating this hybrid identity was to acknowledge formally the similarities between fans and scholars and therefore to highlight the divisions between the two, which are addressed in the following section. In aca-fan writing, scholars acknowledge the centrality of their fan attachments to their subjects or reveal their participation in fan practices and fan communities. Jenkins describes aca-fan writing as an effort 'to break cultural theory out of the academic bookstore ghetto and open up a larger space to talk about the media that matters to us from a consumer's point of view'.<sup>140</sup>

In furtherance of this purpose, aca-fan writing is often a relaxed mixture of a colloquial style and scholarly references. Some writers merely acknowledge their fandom in the introductory sections of their writing, such as Grant's statement at the start of her article about fans of feminist art: 'My position as a writer is equally colored by my own fandom, my own emotional attachment to the history of feminism and feminist art'.<sup>141</sup> However, for other writers, their own fandom becomes a central

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<sup>136</sup> T. Silvio, 'Confessions of an Aca-Fan: the Official Weblog of Henry Jenkins', *American Anthropologist* 112, no. 2 (2010), 320.

<sup>137</sup> B. Thomas, 'What Is Fanfiction and Why Are People Saying Such Nice Things about It?', *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3, no. 1 (2011), 1–24.

<sup>138</sup> M.C. Scardaville, 'Accidental Activists: Fan Activism in the Soap Opera Community', *American Behavioral Scientist* 48, no. 7 (2005), 881–901.

<sup>139</sup> H. Jenkins, *Portrait of an Aca-Fan as a Young Man or How I Became a Qwack!* (2010), accessed 11 January 2014 at [www.henryjenkins.org/2008/02/what\\_ludwig\\_von\\_drake\\_taught\\_m.html#sthash.qEd5mqW7.dpuf](http://www.henryjenkins.org/2008/02/what_ludwig_von_drake_taught_m.html#sthash.qEd5mqW7.dpuf).

<sup>140</sup> H. Jenkins, *About Me*, accessed 14 January 2014 at [www.henryjenkins.org/aboutme.html](http://www.henryjenkins.org/aboutme.html).

<sup>141</sup> C. Grant, 'Fans of Feminism: Re-Writing Histories of Second-Wave Feminism in Contemporary Art', *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 2 (2011), 265–286.

theme of narratives that evolve into combinations of critical enquiry, creative writing and personal essays. Christopher Smit's 2011 book *The Exile of Britney Spears: A Tale of 21st Century Consumption* exemplifies this.<sup>142</sup> Smit's aca-fan text interlaces a critical biography of Spears's representation in the popular media with passages of autobiography revealing his family history, personal history and strong fan feelings for Spears. In this text, Smit fully realises Sandvoss's assertion that postmodern identity is reflected and constituted through celebrity identification and affinity.<sup>143</sup>

Criticism of the aca-fan style of approaching fandom includes the concern expressed by Hills that its depictions idealise fan communities that adhere to academic models and romanticise the role of fan scholars who research and explore their subjects outside academic institutions.<sup>144</sup> Hills accuses Jenkins of forcing an academic value system upon fan culture and portraying fans as 'miniaturized academics'.<sup>145</sup> This undercurrent of concern in fan studies parallels the tensions between art world artists and artists considered to be 'outsiders'. These debates raise concerns that the qualities of fandom that make fans vulnerable to cultural criticism may not be inherent to fandom but rather reflective of cultural tastes and values. For example, the excessive emotion associated with fandom exemplified by Grant's observation that 'to be a fan of something indicates an over-attachment, an excessive engagement that goes beyond the intellectual' is deemed to be distasteful in milieux defined by emotional reserve and intellectual activity.<sup>146</sup> The following section thus examines cultural corollaries between fans, fan expression and marginalised communities as well as the theoretical response to these issues within fan studies.

A central debate in fan studies, as developed from the evolution of aca-fandom, is between the primacy of academics' fan identities in their scholarship and the relationship between fandom and the scholar's authority as an academic.<sup>147</sup> According

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<sup>142</sup> C.R., *Exile*, 19.

<sup>144</sup> M. Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 7.

<sup>145</sup> M. Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 8.

<sup>146</sup> C. Grant, 'Fans of Feminism', 265.

<sup>147</sup> C. Grant, 'Fans of Feminism', 265.

to media scholar Matt Hills, an aca-fan differs from a 'fan scholar' because academic identity is central to professional identity, methodology and writing style, whereas a 'fan scholar' might utilise the vocabulary and methods of academia, but is neither institutionally validated nor self-identified as an academic.<sup>148</sup> Poet and commentator Sheenagh Pugh is an example of the aca-fan genre, writing about fan fiction from an explicitly subjective perspective.<sup>149</sup> The stance of an academic studying fandom, while overtly acknowledging his own fandom in his work, provides a parallel to the artists addressed in this thesis, who occupy positions of critical authority as members of the art world while also creating art as fans.

Jenkins acknowledges that in the early literature about fans, 'often fans were treated as inarticulate, incapable of explaining their motives or actions'.<sup>150</sup> Jenkins criticises these early forms of academic investigation into fandom for failing to engage directly with fan communities by using established ethnographic methods of participatory research. This form of investigation into fandom inadvertently marginalised fans by isolating their activities as aberrant. A lack of authentic voices was a shared complaint among fan scholars in the late 1990s and the first decade of the millennium when discussing the early years of academic engagement with fans.<sup>151</sup> Aca-fan writing within the field has rectified this lack. This thesis proposes that aca-fans serve as a model for artists, such as McGinley, who self-identify as fans while asserting critical observations about their celebrity subjects' broader social significance through their work.

### **Scholarly Opposition to Fandom**

Although aca-fandom provides a form for academics to explore their fan identities, cultural studies scholar Ien Ang, writing in the early 1990s, criticises academia for sharing the media industry's tendency to objectify fans and portray them as interesting 'others' rather than interpreting fans' behaviour and identities within

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<sup>148</sup> M. Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 134, 196.

<sup>149</sup> S. Pugh, *The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context* (Bridgend: Seren, 2005).

<sup>150</sup> H. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, ix.

<sup>151</sup> C. Harris, 'Introduction: Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity', *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1998), 5.

normative standards of cultural engagement. Harris also finds fault with academia's reliance on maintaining 'objectifying, exterior perspectives ... which slight the insider's dimensions of audience-hood'.<sup>152</sup> Sociologist Joli Jensen identifies pejorative distinctions between scholars, fans and aficionados that might analogously cause artists also to feel apprehensive about putting their fan identities forward in their work.<sup>153</sup> Jensen's 1992 essay tackles issues broached by other scholars, including the pathologies of fan attachments and assumed divides between scholars and fans, and underlines class prejudice in the negative characterisation of fans. She argues that social analysts predicate their research on assumptions that fans are 'victims of forces that somehow will not influence [researchers]'.<sup>154</sup> She identifies these forces as the commercial industries producing pop culture material as well as fans' propensity to engage uncritically in parasocial interactions. 'The commentator on fandom', she writes, '[in contrast] is protected by reason or education or critical insight'.<sup>155</sup> This value-laden distinction based on the scholarly dismissal of fans' 'objects of desire and modes of enactment'<sup>156</sup> creates a critical climate in which artists, as well as scholars, may be dissuaded from asserting their fan identities because they do not wish to accept the risk that their work might be dismissed as lacking critical insight and complexity.

Jensen's assertions about the scholarly dismissal of fans is supported by a 1998 study of academic responses to slash fiction conducted by Shoshanna Green, Cynthia Jenkins and Henry Jenkins.<sup>157</sup> Slash fiction, which can serve as a comparative model for artists' creative appropriations of celebrity subjects, was a popular subgenre, which developed in the mid-late 1990s and remains popular, in which fans wrote homoerotic short stories involving heterosexual characters from popular culture

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<sup>152</sup> I. Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991), 11.

<sup>153</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 9–30.

<sup>154</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 19.

<sup>155</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 25.

<sup>156</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 19.

<sup>157</sup> S. Green, C. Jenkins and H. Jenkins, 'Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking: Selections from the Terra Nostra Underground and Strange Bedfellows', in C. Harris and A. Alexander, eds., *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1998), 9–41.

sources. Although dismissing Mark Dery's definition of slash fiction as 'textual poaching in which tales told for mass-consumption are reworked for subcultural needs', Green and co-authors characterise the unauthorised use of media characters in slash fiction as evidence of fans' creative independence from commercial influences and present the subversion of sexual categories as emblematic of fans transgressing the boundaries of creative ownership to interpret and possess the objects of their fan interest.<sup>158</sup>

However, the Green, Jenkins and Jenkins article is not a discussion of slash fiction itself. Rather, it focuses on the limitations and biases of academic and journalistic interpretations based on assumptions about the intellectual merit of fans' objects of desire and modes of enactment. The authors assess references and responses to slash fiction in sources ranging from law journals and literary reviews to scholarly studies devoted to the topic.<sup>159</sup> Their primary goal is to correct the perceived flaws in the academic accounts of slash fiction, which they assert mistakenly isolate slash from other forms of fan fiction and textual poaching.<sup>160</sup> Their observations recording presumptions about fans' 'subjective and impassioned engagement' by scholars studying fans' creative output are also relevant to the artists.<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, their conclusion that 'a false distance may be highly distortive to our understanding of the complexity of popular culture ... what is at stake here is who gets to speak about popular culture, in what kinds of languages, in what contexts, and with what authority' serves as a persuasive argument for the inclusion of fans' voices in discourse about the mass media and as an analytical tool for evaluating fans' ambiguous presence in contemporary art and similarly privileged intellectual forums.

Scholars' motives for maintaining a critical distance, despite the problems expressed by Harris and Ang, relate to cultural distinctions between fans' enthusiasm and scholars' authority.<sup>162</sup> As Jenkins and colleagues describe in their 1998 study of slash

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<sup>158</sup> M. Dery, 'Flame Wars: the Discourse of Cyberculture', *South Atlantic Quarterly* (Fall 1993, Special Issue), 853.

<sup>159</sup> S. Green, C. Jenkins and H. Jenkins, 'Normal Female Interest', 10.

<sup>160</sup> S. Green, C. Jenkins and H. Jenkins, 'Normal Female Interest', 11.

<sup>161</sup> S. Green, C. Jenkins and H. Jenkins, 'Normal Female Interest', 13.

<sup>162</sup> I. Ang, *Desperately Seeking*, 11.

fiction, fandom by its nature is antithetical to an accepted academic voice. ‘Fan criticism does differ from academic criticism in significant ways: the subjective and impassioned engagement with the material, the rejection of specialized technical language and theoretical authority, and the tendency to focus on personal rather than institutional explanations’.<sup>163</sup> This essay frames fan studies’ subjectivity as a productive response to academic tradition and an enlightening opportunity since ‘a false distance may be highly distortive to understanding the complexity of popular culture’.<sup>164</sup> Conversely, Jenkins’s description of the contrast between academic expression and fandom underlines the prejudices against fans.

### **Fandom and Prejudice: Negative Assertions about Fans in Scholarship and Popular Culture**

The fan studies community has largely regarded negative depictions of fandom as rooted in socio-economic prejudice and conflicts between audiences and media producers. According to Jenkins, ‘The fan still constitutes a scandalous category in contemporary culture, alternatively the target of ridicule and anxiety, of dread and desire [...] The stereotypical conception of the fan, while not without a limited factual basis, amounts to a projection of anxieties about the violation of dominant cultural values’.<sup>165</sup> Those anxieties arise from the cultural disparities that determine which groups’ values are privileged. As shown herein, the consensus among fan studies scholars is that fandom is largely portrayed and perceived in popular culture and study as connected to historically, socially and politically disempowered groups. Issues of prejudice based on class, gender and sexuality colour the responses to fandom. These images of fandom are replicated in the critical and audience responses to work by Kilimnik, Peyton and Vine discussed in this thesis. The following section engages the negative stereotypes ascribed to fans that are most relevant to the central artists in this thesis.

#### ***Immature Fans: Stereotypes of Fans as Regressive***

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<sup>163</sup> S. Green, C. Jenkins and H. Jenkins, ‘Normal Female Interest’, 13.

<sup>164</sup> S. Green, C. Jenkins and H. Jenkins, ‘Normal Female Interest’, 13.

<sup>165</sup> S. Green, C. Jenkins and H. Jenkins, ‘Normal Female Interest’, 15.

As indicated in the psychoanalytic treatment of fandom, fan feelings are perceived as grounded in early periods of an individual's identity development.<sup>166</sup> This characterisation emphasises the significance of adolescence as a liminal, transformational period within which individuals experience and learn about impulse and emotion control.<sup>167</sup> The excessive fantasies and projected emotions associated with parasocial interactions are developmentally appropriate during this stage of psychological development, but can be misplaced later in life. Explicit forms of fandom are understood by social psychologists to be ways in which to extend adolescence into adulthood.<sup>168</sup> This image of fandom is validated by studies that show celebrity worship waning as fans enter adulthood.<sup>169</sup> Early adolescence has been found to be the high point of celebrity idolisation, when teenagers use celebrities as objects of their emotion and models for their behaviour. During adolescence, the period when individuals form identities and roles within their immediate communities, celebrity worship serves a useful developmental function.<sup>170</sup>

However, because fundamental concerns about identity and socialisation can be stigmatised when they remain unresolved after adolescence, adult fandom is negatively viewed as regressive or immature. In a study of Hollywood's cinematic representations of its own fans, Lewis concludes that popular opinion represents 'fandom [as] a sign of immaturity and femininity'.<sup>171</sup> To support this conclusion,

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<sup>166</sup> K. Harley, 'Grown-Ups and Fanboys', *Postmodern Culture* 4, no. 2 (1994), accessed 5 October 2014 at [www.muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern\\_culture/v004/4.2r\\_harley.html](http://www.muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/v004/4.2r_harley.html); S. Van der Graaf, 'Much Ado about Keanu Reeves: The Drama of Ageing in Online Fandom', in *Social Sciences Research Network* (Brussels: University of Brussels, 2012); L. Harrington and D.D. Bielby, 'Autobiographical Reasoning in Long-Term Fandom', *Transformative Works and Cultures* 5 (2010); T. Anderson, 'Still Kissing Their Posters Goodnight: Female Fandom and the Politics of Popular Music', *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 9, no. 2 (2012), 239–264.

<sup>167</sup> M. Csikszentmihalyi and E. Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 117.

<sup>168</sup> T. Anderson, 'Still Kissing Their Posters Goodnight', 239–264.

<sup>169</sup> A. Raviv, D. Bar-Tal and A. Ben-Horin, 'Adolescent Idolization of Pop Singers: Causes, Expressions, and Reliance', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 25, no. 5 (1996), 631; S.C. Chia and Y. Ling Poo, 'Media, Celebrities, and Fans: an Examination of Adolescents' Media Usage and Involvement with Entertainment Celebrities', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2009), 23–44.

<sup>170</sup> A. Raviv, D. Bar-Tal, A. Raviv and A. Ben-Horin, 'Adolescent Idolization', 632.

<sup>171</sup> L. Lewis, 'Something More than Love', 136.

Lewis presents synopses of seventeen popular films from the 1950s to the 1980s that depict negative characterisations of the fan–star relationship, primarily founded upon destructive forms of imbalanced dependence and transferences of psychological need. Lewis opens her essay with a description of *Sunset Boulevard*, a film that represents a celebrity’s need for fans’ affection, without which she suffers a breakdown of identity.<sup>172</sup> She concludes that “fandom is overwhelmingly associated with adolescence or childhood, that is, with a state of arrested development or youth-oriented nostalgia, not mature adulthood”.<sup>173</sup>

Fan fixations that continue from adolescence into adulthood have been the subject of ethnographic studies focused on fan groups for popular and relatively obscure musicians.<sup>174</sup> Similar studies of the lifelong fans of film stars from Hollywood’s early days address the ways in which female fans integrate their appreciation for celebrities into their own identities.<sup>175</sup> These works examine the organisation, structure and history of particular fan groups. In one such study, sociologist Tonya Anderson researches her adult peers who remain active in Duran Duran fan communities in order to examine women’s reasons for continuing to engage in fan activities into middle age.<sup>176</sup> Anderson conducts her ethnographic field investigation as a rebuttal to portrayals of adult female fans as pathological in dominant cultural politics.<sup>177</sup> While acknowledging her own fandom for the popular band from the 1980s, Anderson conducts her study of its middle-aged followers as a representative sample of adult fans rather than a portrait of specifically Duran Duran’s loyal ‘cult’ following.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> L. Lewis, ‘Something More than Love’, 135.

<sup>173</sup> L. Lewis, ‘Something More than Love’, 157.

<sup>174</sup> J. Garde-Hansen, *Media and Memory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 120–136; N. Stevenson, *David Bowie: Fame, Sound and Vision* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006); L. Bennett, ‘Delegitimizing Strategic Power: Normative Identity and Governance in Online REM Fandom’, *Transformative Works and Cultures* 7 (2011), accessed 1 December 2013 at [journal.transformativeworks.com/index.php/twc/article/view/281](http://journal.transformativeworks.com/index.php/twc/article/view/281).

<sup>175</sup> R. Moseley, *Growing Up with Audrey Hepburn: Text, Audience, Resonance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); A. Kuhn, *Women’s Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (London: Verso, 1994), 21–42.

<sup>176</sup> T. Anderson, ‘Still Kissing Their Posters’, 239.

<sup>177</sup> T. Anderson, ‘Still Kissing Their Posters’, 239.

<sup>178</sup> T. Anderson, ‘Still Kissing Their Posters’, 239.

Anderson concludes that fandom enables ‘reclaimed youth’ in older ‘female pop fans [who] experience a euphoric empowerment from performing the same fannish activities they did as teens’.<sup>179</sup> In another study, this one of women whose admiration for the actress Audrey Hepburn continued throughout their lives, Rachel Moseley engages with adult fans who reject the notion of emulating their idol and discusses a subtle process of developing an identity in which aspects of a star’s style or persona become interwoven with the fan’s sense of her individuality.<sup>180</sup> Moseley’s conclusion is reflected in work by the chosen artists, who are primarily adult women during the main periods of their artistic production.

### ***Pathological Fans: Fandom and Mental Illness***

Pathological fans, in factual accounts and fiction, often assert that they are different and more intensely invested in fandom than other fans. However, media responses to aberrant behaviour by pathological fans often interpret their fan feelings as pathological and dangerous.<sup>181</sup> For individuals and groups, the expression of fan loyalty can be misused to justify aberrant behaviour and attitudes. In extreme cases, such as outbreaks of collective aggression among sports fans in England in the 1980s, fandom has been perverted into an outlet for social unrest.<sup>182</sup> Scholars have examined the mass violence of sports fanatics as a contemporary assertion of tribal identity among largely disenfranchised groups of men.<sup>183</sup> However, in a collection of essays that study football fans in Britain, Europe, Argentina and the United States, sociologist Richard Giulianotti convincingly argues that violence among sports fans reflects the nature of sports more than fandom.<sup>184</sup> He proposes that ‘militant fans’

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<sup>179</sup> T. Anderson, ‘Still Kissing Their Posters’, 239.

<sup>180</sup> R. Moseley, *Growing Up with Audrey Hepburn: Text, Audience, Resonance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 78.

<sup>181</sup> L. Lewis, ‘Something More than Love’, 144.

<sup>182</sup> T. Crabbe, ‘“The Public Gets What the Public Wants”: England Football Fans, “Truth” Claims and Mediated Realities’, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 38, no. 4 (2003), 413–425.

<sup>183</sup> B. Zani and E. Kirchler, ‘When Violence Overshadows the Spirit of Sporting Competition: Italian Football Fans and Their Clubs’, *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1991), 5–21; R. Giulianotti, N. Bonney and M. Hepworth, eds., *Football, Violence and Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994); E. Dunning, *Fighting Fans: Football Hooliganism as a World Phenomenon* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002); L.I.N. Xin, ‘Cause and Countermeasure Study on The Fans’ Violence’, *Journal of Hebei Institute of Physical Education* 3 (2007), 15; G. Armstrong, *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score* (Berlin: Berg, 1998), 123.

mirror the values of the game, which are premised on aggressive conflict and competitiveness. The collective nature of sports fans' aggression, believed to take the form of organised rivalry, separates the subjects of these studies from the ambit of this thesis, which focuses on individuals' expressions of fandom, although the image of the 'football hooligan' haunts discussions of fandom.<sup>185</sup>

A study of fans who stalk celebrities, conducted by psychologists Brian Spitzberg and William Cupach, concludes that the nature of fan stalking and the percentage of fans who aggressively pursue celebrities mirror the rate of these aberrant behaviours in relationships that are interpersonal, not parasocial.<sup>186</sup> However, negative assumptions about fans and mental illness are exemplified by political scientist Anthony Elliott's 1999 textual analysis of John Lennon's legacy, in which he bases his assessment of fandom on an analysis of Mark Chapman, the mentally ill fan who fatally shot the singer. In this account, Elliott presents destructive, potentially homicidal fan projection as an exaggerated form of normative fandom.<sup>187</sup> He further perceives fandom as representing a fan's inherently distorted relationship with reality. He argues that 'there is a curious sort of violence intrinsic to fandom ... the relationship of fan and celebrity is troubled because violence is built in'.<sup>188</sup>

Jensen argues that fans' collective behaviours are symptomatic of existential flaws within contemporary society, not fandom itself. She reasons, 'these assumptions – about alienation, atomization, vulnerability and irrationality – are central aspects of twentieth-century beliefs about modernity'.<sup>189</sup> Like the study by Spitzberg and Cupach, Jensen concludes that pathological forms of fandom are perversions of issues found across contemporary culture and not distinct issues themselves.

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<sup>184</sup> R. Guilianotti et al, 4.

<sup>185</sup> G. Armstrong and R. Harris, 'Football Hooligans: Theory and Evidence', *The Sociological Review* 39, no. 3 (1991), 427–458.

<sup>186</sup> B. Spitzberg and W. Cupach, *Fanning the Flames of Fandom: Celebrity Worship, Parasocial Interaction, and Stalking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 286–318.

<sup>187</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 84.

<sup>188</sup> A. Elliott, *The Mourning of John Lennon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 139.

<sup>189</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 14.

### *Fandom and Gender*

While the most sinister and violent forms of fandom are often attributed to men, Lewis observes that fandom is frequently represented as feminine.<sup>190</sup> Depictions of fans in the 1960s, especially the Beatles' fans, primarily focused upon young women.<sup>191</sup> 'Beatlemania' was a North American movement of unprecedented fan frenzy that peaked in 1964 and 1965.<sup>192</sup> In studies of Beatlemania, female fandom was characterised as mysterious and cult-like, hysterical, sexual and receptive, whereas male fans' activities, such as record collecting and cataloguing and forming tribute bands, presented fandom as a form of creative inspiration. Media scholar Janne Mäkelä argues that this divergence actually represented productive aspects of female Beatles fans, which formed more coherent and motivated fan communities than their comparatively isolated male counterparts.<sup>193</sup> However, this focus on female fans effectively diminished the status afforded to fans and fan practices before the rise of feminism.<sup>194</sup>

Anderson presents fandom as a means of escapism for adult women, yet C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby argue that fandom can aid fans' acceptance of aging and continue to enhance identity formation.<sup>195</sup> By employing concepts from gerontology, psychology and human development studies regarding aging, their respondents describe how their interests in specific characters or details evolve and change as they age, while their attachment to a text remains consistent.<sup>196</sup> 'Texts inform our aging process', they write, and 'media fans' life narratives might thus be said to comprise complex interactions between our "real" life (our biographies), our

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<sup>190</sup> L. Lewis, 'Something More than Love', 135.

<sup>191</sup> J. Mäkelä, *John Lennon Imagined: Cultural History of a Rock Star* (vol 4) (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), 79.

<sup>192</sup> B. Ehrenreich, E. Hess and G. Jacobs, 'Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun', in L. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (London: Routledge, 1992), 85.

<sup>193</sup> L. Lewis, 'Something More than Love', 137.

<sup>194</sup> B. Ehrenreich, E. Hess and G. Jacobs, 'Beatlemania', 87.

<sup>195</sup> C.L. Harrington and D. Bielby, 'A Life Course Perspective on Fandom', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 13, no. 5 (2010), 444.

<sup>196</sup> C.L. Harrington and D. Bielby, 'A Life Course Perspective', 429.

autobiography (our storying of our lives), and the media texts which help construct, give meaning and guide our relationship between the two – that age along with us'.<sup>197</sup> As discussed in later chapters, this balance in maturity between an ideal self and a reality-based self, as mediated by adored texts, is illustrated by the work by Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine.

In addition to exploring the role of gender and identity in fandom, fan studies examine the significance of sexual expression in fandom. Media influences on adolescents' sexuality are regular topics of interest for pop culture pundits and scholars in fields such as psychology, cultural studies and sociology.<sup>198</sup> An example is Jane Brown's study of adolescents' methods of incorporating depictions of adult sexuality into their sexual development, which primarily focuses on how media representations shape adolescents' activities and relationships with their peers.<sup>199</sup> Fandom, however, can perform a different function within the sexual lives of adolescents and adults since fandom is a forum for fantasy and potential sublimation beyond an influence on actual activity.

### *Fandom and Socio-Economic Identity*

Jensen analyses the images of excess, deviance and danger from early mass communications scholarship and mass media accounts of fans. She uses this material to demonstrate that fandom is associated with fanaticism because of unchecked class prejudices triggered by judgements of taste based on fans' 'objects of desire and modes of enactment', not the nature of fandom.<sup>200</sup> Jensen believes that despite conditions of modernity that affect culture across demographic divides, assumptions about fandom pertain to class stigma: 'The obsession of a fan is deemed emotional (low class, uneducated) and therefore dangerous, while the obsession of the

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<sup>197</sup> C.L. Harrington and D. Bielby, 'A Life Course Perspective', 429.

<sup>198</sup> R.L. Collins, M. Elliott et al., 'Watching Sex on Television Predicts Adolescent Initiation of Sexual Behavior', *Paediatrics* 114, no. 3 (2004), 280–289; J.D. Brown, 'Adolescents' Sexual Media Diets', *Journal of Adolescent Health* 27, no. 2 (2000), 35–40; B. Greenberg, J.D. Brown and N. Buerkel-Rothfuss, *Media, Sex, and the Adolescent* (Virginia: Hampton Press, 1993).

<sup>199</sup> J.D. Brown, 'Mass Media Influences on Sexuality', *Journal of Sex Research* 39, no. 1 (2002), 42–45.

<sup>200</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 19.

aficionado is rational (high class, educated) and therefore benign, even worthy'.<sup>201</sup> Critical responses to the subjects of artists addressed in this thesis and by extension their artwork reflect those attitudes that Jensen identifies in depictions of fans.

Jensen's argument is supported by her observation that fans considered to be deviant and pathological, on the one hand, and aficionados devoted to culturally lauded material, on the other, share the same underlying emotional investment in their objects of interest. The primary distinction between the two forms of practice is reception, because fandom is often secretive while aficionados are allowed pride and gain social prestige through the exhibition of their enthusiasm. She locates the boundaries between the two categories and the value judgements that accompany them as the cultural status accorded to their objects of interest and posits that 'fandom involves an ascription of excess, and emotional display ... [while] affinity, on the other hand, is deemed to involve rational evaluation, and is displayed in more measured ways'.<sup>202</sup>

According to this interpretation, artists' choices of subject matter can determine the critical reception and interpretation of their work.<sup>203</sup> The artist Jeff Wall, for example, exhibits his profound knowledge and appreciation for Manet in his art. He appropriates the impressionist's images and is granted critical credibility and approval by the art world.<sup>204</sup> In his personal conduct with his source material, however, Wall exemplifies fan-like forms through his repeated consumption of Manet and explicit reverence for the artist.<sup>205</sup> However, Wall's conceptual re-imaginings are aesthetically restrained, unlike work that exemplifies fan feelings, and they are regarded differently

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<sup>201</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 19.

<sup>202</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 20.

<sup>203</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 21.

<sup>204</sup> M. Fried, 'Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday', *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 3 (2007), 495–526; J.F. Chevrier, 'A Painter of Modern Life. an Interview between Jeff Wall and Jean-François Chevrier', *Jeff Wall. Figures & Places: Selected Works from 1978-2000* (New York: Prestel Publishing, 2001), 168–185.

<sup>205</sup> M. Newman, 'Towards the Reinvigoration of the "Western Tableau": Some Notes on Jeff Wall and Duchamp', *Oxford Art Journal* 30, no. 1 (2007), 81–100.

from Peyton's portraits of rock stars because his work functions as conversation between two high-art sources.

Jensen's assertions about class prejudice are pivotal to the discussion of art by Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine in the upcoming chapters. Here, it is sufficient to note that Jensen proposes that fandom and scholarship share salient similarities in terms of attitude towards objects of interest, but they are regarded differently because of the divergent values assigned to the people admiring mass-produced texts and the texts themselves. Jensen's analysis presents fans as somewhat victimised by contemporary culture. Supplementing this interpretation is Sandvoss's speculation that negative depictions of fans 'contain an element of celebration of the media's own power and influence' as well as 'displac[ing] fears over media effects onto the imagined "Other" of psychologically and socially inept fans'.<sup>206</sup> This dynamic depicts fans as passive and vulnerable to exploitative media influences. In a review of Sandvoss's work about fans, Richard Lloyd writes that the word 'fan' implies 'a subordinate if not abject position vis-à-vis the object of adoration', while Sandvoss challenges this depiction by presenting fandom as a healthy part and expression of individuals' identity formation. Sandvoss rejects Fiske's assertion that fans are engaged in subverting a hegemonic media industry by subversively appropriating cultural references and urges scholars to accept that fandom and fan practices extend beyond disempowered socio-economic and marginalised groups.<sup>207</sup> However, while rejecting fandom as a political act, Sandvoss acknowledges that associations between fans and disempowered groups can give rise to negative responses to fandom and fan practices.<sup>208</sup>

### **Textual Productivity, Pleasure and Politics: Active and Resistant Fans and Creative Fan Practices**

Theorists such as Lewis support Sandvoss's rejection of a binary divide between fans and producers of popular culture. As she observes, members of the film industry often trace their creative influences to their own fandom and thus their own fandom shapes

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<sup>206</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 2.

<sup>207</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 2–7, 11–18, 32.

<sup>208</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 32–33.

their creation of cultural products.<sup>209</sup> Although Lewis's case studies focus on disparaging representations of fans, she also identifies textual competency as a trait that defines fans in media representation.<sup>210</sup> Fans, in contrast to passive audience members, are not just consumers of the mass media but also producers of material that expands beyond the original texts. In large enough numbers, fans can, in rare instances, exert their collective power by pressuring cultural producers to meet their desires, such as returning a beloved television show to the air.<sup>211</sup> Individual fans and fan communities can create meanings and dynamics independent of the original artistic content and context of the texts that they admire. As Grant summarises, 'Fandom can be a creative, productive space of engagement with popular culture'.<sup>212</sup>

Fandom can also, as Fiske argues, express or prompt political content beyond consumption. According to Fiske, fans' contribution to the culture industry involves turning the mass media into tools for their own progressive *textual productivity*. In discussing creative engagement with pop culture sources by fans outside the art world, Fiske's term 'textual productivity' is used to describe individual fans' engagement with cultural products as 'user[s] not simply consuming a commodity but reworking it, treating it not as a completed object to be accepted passively, but as a cultural resource to be used'.<sup>213</sup> He argues that fans derive pleasure from extracting semiotic meanings from popular culture texts and creatively engaging with texts.<sup>214</sup> To Fiske, fandom is an inherently creative act that he perceives as marginalised because textual productivity approximates the 'artistic productions validated by the official culture', while lacking competence and professionalism.<sup>215</sup> The naïf aesthetic that Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine employ to express their fan feelings represents unprofessional fans' artistic production.

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<sup>209</sup> L. Lewis, 'More than Love', 135.

<sup>210</sup> L. Lewis, 'Something More than Love', 136.

<sup>211</sup> M. Scardaville, 'Accidental Activists', 882.

<sup>212</sup> C. Grant, 'Fans of Feminism', 269.

<sup>213</sup> J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 11.

<sup>214</sup> J. Fiske, 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom', 30.

<sup>215</sup> J. Fiske, 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom', 39.

Questions of competence can also complicate the political application of fandom since fans express potential underlining concerns by proxy, through the choice of subjects and emotional intensity, rather than directing themselves towards focused activism.<sup>216</sup> Fandom can therefore serve, at both personal and collective levels, as a gateway to political awareness. In their study of Beatlemania, Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs argue that the female adolescent composition of the Beatles fan movement compelled feminist scholars to interpret it as a symptom of pre-feminist frustration and young women's emerging radicalisation.<sup>217</sup> Within the localised historical context of Beatles worship, Beatlemania expressed a set of tensions and communal needs beyond the content and context of the Beatles' music or commercial purpose, such as the pre-feminist concerns that Ehrenreich identifies.

Although symbols of sexual awakening and longing can be read into commercial works created by the industry promoting the Beatles, as Lisa Lewis argues, the frenzy associated with the group was generated by the fans themselves,<sup>218</sup> although the aggressive mass media vocabulary describing their arrival in the United States may have contributed to the phenomenon.<sup>219</sup> The cultural industries that represented Beatlemania reflected, rather than orchestrated, its intensity. According to Ehrenreich and colleagues, 'If it was not the "movement", or a clear cut protest of any kind, Beatlemania was the first and most dramatic uprising of women's sexual revolution'.<sup>220</sup> This assertion is based on their understanding of fandom as a constructive outlet for feelings of voicelessness among young women oppressed by patriarchal social constructs. The excessive noise associated with Beatlemania, manifested in the mass hysteria that Ehrenreich and co-authors identify as 'to scream, faint and dash about in mobs', provided teenage girls with an outlet for their repressed

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<sup>216</sup> M.M. Brough and S. Shresthova, 'Fandom Meets Activism: Rethinking Civic and Political Participation', *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10 (2011), accessed 18 January 2014 at [www.journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/303](http://www.journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/303).

<sup>217</sup> B. Ehrenreich, E. Hess and G. Jacobs, 'Beatlemania', 84–106.

<sup>218</sup> L. Lewis, 'Something More than Love', 142.

<sup>219</sup> D. McKinney, *Magic Circles: the Beatles in Dream and History* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 51.

<sup>220</sup> B. Ehrenreich, E. Hess and G. Jacobs, 'Beatlemania', 85.

sexual urges and nebulous personal ambition.<sup>221</sup> Rather than passively receiving the cultural material created for their consumption, extreme fans of the Beatles appropriated the pop culture product as a tool to express their identities. As discussed in the next chapter, McGinley directly engages the on-going impact of this phenomenon in his photographic series of Morrissey fans.

### **Case Study: Jeremy Deller Documents Fans' Creativity**

In his art, Deller portrays fans who are zealots, but also fans who are creative individuals reworking their admired texts as tools for personal expression.<sup>222</sup> Within this appreciation of fandom, Deller's mitigated use of the term for himself expresses an artist's ambivalence towards claiming fandom as an identity. Deller explores the political potential for fans of apparently apolitical popular culture in *The Posters Came from the Walls* (2009), a transnational survey of the British electropop band Depeche Mode's fans, made in collaboration with filmmaker Nicholas Abrahams. *The Posters Came from the Walls* is a seventy-two minute documentary of Depeche Mode's fan communities in England, Brazil, Iran and the former Soviet Union. The video adheres to a non-intrusive documentary format of filmed events and personal interviews with fans rather than a critically or aesthetically motivated narrative.<sup>223</sup> Depeche Mode itself is absent from 'The posters came from the walls'. Instead, its fans' intensive creative investment in expressing their affinity with and devotion to the band is the film's only focus. The extreme fan practices that it depicts include fans in Russia celebrating the birthday of lead singer Dave Gahan with escapist zeal despite, or because of, it coinciding with a national holiday. Deller explains his interpretation of the motives of thousands of fans to gather on 'Dave Day' in 1992 as 'to be able to gather together and to celebrate their favorite band provided some kind

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<sup>221</sup> B. Ehrenreich, E. Hess and G. Jacobs, 'Beatlemania', 85.

<sup>222</sup> A. MacDonald, 'Uncertain Utopia: Science Fiction Media Fandom and Computer Mediated Communication', in C. Harris and A. Alexander, eds., *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1998), 135.

<sup>223</sup> For a study of the style, techniques and concerns of documentary filmmaking: B. Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991).

of emotional release after the hardships of communism. Russian teens enjoyed a cultural emancipation with Depeche Mode'.<sup>224</sup>

Depeche Mode's significance for fans in East Berlin, who were introduced to the music through rare bootleg recordings in the 1980s, leads a reviewer to remark that 'being a Depeche Mode fan during Perestroika, it seems, was an instinctively radical political act'.<sup>225</sup> The film conveys that perspective and introduces audiences to the importance of the band in unexpected contexts, highlighting how fandom can also be politically and personally empowering in less extreme circumstances and how popular culture can be animated with different meanings in different contexts. Deller's work, however, is not a subject for this thesis because his art explores others' fandom and not his own.

### **Fan Fiction: Fans' Appropriation of Celebrity**

Beyond the forms of fandom that Deller records in his documentary, perhaps the most prolific and fruitful form of fans' textual poaching occurs in the area of fanfiction. The stories in this genre are produced by fans for an audience of fellow fans and are rarely released beyond fan forums. They often develop into experimental and/or surreal narratives that radically deviate from their original sources.<sup>226</sup> Novelist Lev Grossman argues that fanfiction performs similar intellectual functions to creative critical theory interpretations of the postmodern mass media since '[academics] were tunnelling through from above, via high culture, and the [fans] were working from below – but the goal was the same'.<sup>227</sup> In this instance, the shared goal is to expand the meaning of and expound upon the cultural significance of mass media material as texts. Jenkins describes fans as 'rogue readers', whose attention to the mass media is

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<sup>224</sup> Z. Beaven and C. Laws, "'Never Let Me Down Again' 1: Loyal Customer Attitudes Towards Ticket Distribution Channels for Live Music Events: A Netnographic Exploration of the US Leg of the Depeche Mode 2005–2006 World Tour', *Managing Leisure* 12, no. 2–3 (2007), 122.

<sup>225</sup> A. Pulver, 'The Posters Came from the Walls', *The Guardian* (30 November 2009). Accessed at 8 November 2014 at [theguardian.com/music/2009/nov/30/posters-came-from-the-walls-review](http://theguardian.com/music/2009/nov/30/posters-came-from-the-walls-review).

<sup>226</sup> B. Thomas, 'What Is Fanfiction and Why Are People Saying Such Nice Things about It?', *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3, no. 1 (2011), 1.

<sup>227</sup> L. Grossman, *Fic: Why Fanfiction Is Taking Over the World* (Dallas: BenBella Books, Inc., 2013), xii.

motivated by the intellectual desire to unlock richer meanings beyond the surface information in their chosen texts.<sup>228</sup>

An example of textual productivity among fans using media differently from its creators' intended use is the Brony subculture of adolescent and adult male fans of the My Little Pony television show created for young girls.<sup>229</sup> Whether an attempt to mitigate the awkward mismatch of their identities and interest or to create a conceptual space within their source material to involve themselves, Bronies appropriate characters and clips from the show into homemade music, role-playing games and costume conventions that are more traditionally masculine than the show's own content. Bronies primarily subvert their source material by sexualising it or creating violent alternative plots. However, they extrapolate from the original imagery and plot to express their own personal concerns and aesthetics. In response to this subculture, the show's creators introduced a Brony-based character who represents this unexpected fan base.<sup>230</sup>

Fan studies and queer studies scholar Mafalda Stasi interprets slash fiction on the Internet as an ever-evolving and interactive form of creative engagement that depends on creative collaboration within fan communities.<sup>231</sup> Although distressed by the lack of critical engagement with works of slash fiction based on their relative literary merit, Stasi also discusses how slash fiction reflects the concerns of fan communities rather than privileging the voices of individual authors.<sup>232</sup> She compares online slash fiction to a palimpsest and argues that no work of slash fiction can be read

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<sup>228</sup> H. Jenkins, 'Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 5, no. 2 (1988), 85–107.

<sup>229</sup> W. Wood, 'The Empirical Twilight: A Pony's Guide to Science & Anarchism', *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 6, no. 1 (2011), accessed 18 January 2014 at [www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v6\\_1/wood/](http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v6_1/wood/); E. Hada, 'My Little Pony', *UC Merced Undergraduate Research Journal* 5, no. 1 (2013), accessed 18 January 2014 at [www.escholarship.org/uc/item/95s1q8s1](http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/95s1q8s1).

<sup>230</sup> C. Bell, 'The Ballad of Derpy Hooves: Transgressive Fandom in My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic', *Humanities Directory* 1, no. 1 (2013), accessed 5 October 2014 at [humanitiesdirectory.com/index.php/humanitiesdirectory/article/view/3](http://humanitiesdirectory.com/index.php/humanitiesdirectory/article/view/3).

<sup>231</sup> M. Stasi, 'The Toy Soldiers from Leeds: the Slash Palimpsest', in K. Busse and K. Hellekson, eds., *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (New York: McFarland, 2006), 115–133.

<sup>232</sup> D. Kaplan, 'Construction of Fan Fiction Character through Narrative', in K. Hellekson and K. Busse, *Fan Fiction*, 135.

independently. Instead, every story must be interpreted intertextually through its relationship with the source text and the fan communities' canon. By stressing the significance of comparative literary readings of slash fiction, rather than isolated engagement with individual works, Stasi foregrounds the shared creativity of fan communities and the subculture of fandom as a social network. She problematises the notion of discrete authorship and replaces it with a portrait of collective creativity.<sup>233</sup>

In this way, Stasi separates slash fiction from the artworks discussed in the following two chapters of this thesis. Although the chosen artists are members of the art world, which was defined in the Introduction as a network and subculture, they each work alone. Their studio practice is not collaborative; only Marc Quinn works with outside artisans to produce his sculptures. The other artists create their work without the contribution of studio assistants to their canvases or their participation in the printing of their photographs. This lack of interactivity in the final production of their pieces does not directly distinguish their work from the stories that Stasi analyses. While the artists are not directly responding to each other's works, unlike members of the slash fiction community, who collectively develop their stories through creative dialogues, the artists' work often involves or responds to fans' relationships with their subjects outside the art world. As shown, their art is not interactive with fan communities but represents considered awareness of fan theory and fans' ability to influence the meaning, significance and depiction of celebrities in the public arena. The artists' work is not only about their own responses to celebrities, but also reflects fandom as a creative power that influences and shapes the construction of celebrities.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presents answers to this thesis's first research question: what is a fan and what is the cultural importance of fandom in contemporary art and society? It provides a catalogue of scholarly recognised elements of fandom that the chosen artists display in their work. The scholarship presented by fan studies and related areas of cultural studies, media studies and psychology creates a complex image of fans as individuals whose emotional attachments to mass-produced media make them subject to stigmatization but capable of critical creative expression. Since the

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<sup>233</sup> K. Hellekson and K. Busse, *Fan Fiction*, 27.

development of fandom, as a term and as a concept, fans have expressed themselves in isolation and through communities formed around a shared appreciation of their objects of interest. These communities have supported hysteria, violence, fiction, discussion and emotional solidarity. Similarly, individual fandom can motivate misanthropy as well as social bonds, submissiveness and subversiveness, identity formation and personal pathology. As these characteristics demonstrate, the scholarly literature about fandom is varied and diverse, yet the salient element of fandom is that fans have parasocial interactions with figures whom they understand are constructs yet incorporate them into their personal emotional landscapes and identities. Fans' awareness that celebrities are largely mediated cultural constructs does not undermine their emotional attachments to celebrities' public images because fandom is, ultimately, about the identity of the fan, not of the celebrity.

Against the varied theories presented in this chapter, Sandvoss's definition of fandom as 'emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text' is used in this thesis as the foundational answer to the question 'what is a fan?'<sup>234</sup> Sandvoss's definition of fandom is the most appropriate because of its emphasis on emotion and the lack of specificity regarding the nature of a fan's 'emotional engagement'.<sup>235</sup> The use of 'emotion' as a factor for evaluating fans' motives separates fan artists from other artists who create work about the same subjects with different motivations, such as Deller. Sandvoss does not indicate whether individuals must always have strong positive feelings towards texts in order to qualify as fans. His description allows room for emotions to be unresolved, contradictory or ambivalent. Accordingly, this thesis argues that fandom can be a state of ambivalence and contains paradoxical emotional responses in which the salient aspect of the responses to texts by artists, as fans, must be emotional rather than wholly intellectual.

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<sup>234</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 8.

<sup>235</sup> N.K. Baym, 'The New Shape of Online Community: the Example of Swedish Independent Music Fandom', *First Monday* 12, no. 8 (date unknown), accessed 17 November 2013 at [www.journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1978/1853](http://www.journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1978/1853).

## CHAPTER II

### *Irregular Regulars: Ryan McGinley Depicts His Fandom For Morrissey*

## INTRODUCTION

Photographer Ryan McGinley (b. Ramsey, New Jersey, 1977–) is famous for *Irregular Regulars*, a series of twenty photographs taken over three years attending concerts where the singer Morrissey (b. Lancashire, England, 1959–) performed. This chapter examines the mechanisms of McGinley’s imagery by exploring how he expresses his identity as a Morrissey fan through the aesthetic, narrative and conceptual components of *Irregular Regulars*. As this chapter discusses, McGinley’s fandom is relevant to the series’ meaning and integrity because critics often misinterpret the series as an objective documentation of the fandom of other people, leading them to dismiss the series and overlook its complexity.

In the context of this thesis, *Irregular Regulars* is an appropriate starting point for discussing the spectrum of fans’ emotional attachments to celebrities, because it is the exemplar of fandom and fan identification uncomplicated by emotional contradictions. Forthcoming chapters will investigate the apparently paradoxical combination of adoration, attachment, identification, objectification and aggression present in fandom.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first presents a brief biography of McGinley and an overview of his artistic interests and critical reception. Following this, the images comprising *Irregular Regulars* are presented and their salient qualities are investigated by employing theories introduced in Chapter One and related to Fan Studies literature. This section will argue that Morrissey’s music and politically invested *persona*<sup>236</sup> influence McGinley’s artistic aesthetic in accordance with Sandvoss’s assertion that the modern self is reflected and constituted through relationships with mass media popular culture.<sup>237</sup> To this end, information about Morrissey and scholarly literature discussing the singer will be utilised when relevant to furthering an understanding of McGinley’s fandom and his art.

The second section of this chapter contrasts *Irregular Regulars* with video art by Phil

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<sup>236</sup> J. Stringer, ‘The Smiths: Repressed (but Remarkably Dressed)’, *Popular Music* 11, no. 1 (1992), 16–26.

<sup>237</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 2.

Collins (b. Runcon, England, 1970–) and Candice Breitz (b. Johannesburg, South Africa, 1972–). It will be demonstrated that Collins and Breitz mask their fan allegiances to focus on fandom as a cultural phenomenon, whereas McGinley's apparently documentary images actually explore the influence of his emotionally invested media consumption on his personal and artistic identity.<sup>238</sup>

## I. RYAN MCGINLEY: CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

### McGinley's Biographical Background and Signature Artistic Style

#### *Overview*

Ryan McGinley was born in 1977 and raised in a working-class Irish-American household in New Jersey. McGinley reports that his emotional investment in Morrissey began with a childhood admiration for The Smiths' album art. As an adolescent, his fan affinity developed into attachment to Morrissey's music and persona. As a teenager, he developed a racially and socio-economically diverse group of close friends in Manhattan. He documented these friendships at the outset of his career. From 1998 until 2003, he primarily focused his camera on prominent participants in New York's street art community (figures 1 and 2). These images of adolescent artists and friends were first exhibited in 2003 at the Whitney Museum of American Art and PS1 Contemporary Art Center / Museum of Modern Art, Long Island City in 2004. At the time of the exhibition, McGinley was the youngest artist granted a solo exhibition at these venues.<sup>239</sup> This accolade earned McGinley art star standing. McGinley's celebrity status evolved concurrently with his creation of *Irregular Regulars*. This exhibition catapulted his notoriety from subcultural stardom to mainstream recognition. Publicity for the show included a cover story in *New York* magazine announcing that McGinley and his childhood best friends, Dash Snow and Dan Colen, were the defining art stars of their generation.<sup>240</sup> Evidence of tensions

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<sup>238</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 8.

<sup>239</sup> McGinley's early success was the subject of later articles, including: P. Gefer, 'A Young Man With an Eye, and Friends Up a Tree', *The New York Times* (6 May 2007); A. Levy, 'Chasing Artist and Downtown Legend Dash Snow - New York Magazine', *Nymag.com* (25 November 2011), accessed 5 March 2014 at [www.nymag.com/arts/art/profiles/26288/](http://www.nymag.com/arts/art/profiles/26288/); Anonymous, 'Ryan McGinley: Artist's Profile', *Saatchi Online Gallery*, accessed 5 March 2014 at [www.saatchigallery.com/artists/ryan\\_mcginley.htm](http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/ryan_mcginley.htm); N. Freedman, 'Ryan McGinley: the Pied Piper of the Downtown Art World', *The New York Times* (20 November 2013), accessed 5 March 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2013/11/21/fashion/Ryan-McGinleys-Apprentices-cool-kids-in-the-downtown-art-scene.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/21/fashion/Ryan-McGinleys-Apprentices-cool-kids-in-the-downtown-art-scene.html?_r=0).

between McGinley's celebrity status and his fan identity are addressed later in this chapter.

Following the *New York* magazine article, McGinley changed the nature and focus of his work. Instead of continuing to report on his intimate interpersonal relationships, in 2003 he began orchestrating formal photo-shoots with pre-planned locations and an invited cast of participants. He simultaneously established himself as a fashion photographer, working with high-end publications and advertising campaigns.<sup>241</sup> Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, his signature aesthetic and visual sensibility remained consistent, from his impromptu photographs of friends in Manhattan to organised trips with models across America and collaborative work with stylists and editors for fashion images. The salient qualities unifying McGinley's separate series were his focus on youth and the emotional effects generated by his combination of soft natural light and manipulated colour, created through his preparation of analogue film and hand-printed images.

In 2003, critic Holland Cotter described McGinley's signature *verité* snapshot aesthetic and glorification of youth as 'relaxed and playful, as if the world were on recess'.<sup>242</sup> Critic Vince Aletti, writing for the *New Yorker*, similarly summarised McGinley's aesthetic as 'loose, sensuous [and] exhilarating'.<sup>243</sup> The idyllic atmosphere that Aletti and Cotter identified was produced by McGinley's use of soft light, highly saturated colour and coloured filters for his film, as well as his contextual focus on young men and women relaxing or behaving irreverently. A representative image of McGinley's artwork from 2003 is an untitled print of two separate images printed together vertically (figure 1). Both photographs depict young people happily

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<sup>240</sup> A. Levy, 'Warhol's Children: Chasing Dash Snow', *New York Magazine* (7 January 2007), accessed 8 November 2014 at [nymag.com/arts/art/profiles/26288/](http://nymag.com/arts/art/profiles/26288/).

<sup>241</sup> J. Ma, 'Odd Couple: Ryan McGinley and Karlie Koss Shot a Commercial', *New York Magazine* (13 February 2013), accessed 6 March 2014 at [www.nymag.com/the-cut/2013/02/odd-couple-ryan-mcginley-karlie-kloss-new-ad.html](http://www.nymag.com/the-cut/2013/02/odd-couple-ryan-mcginley-karlie-kloss-new-ad.html).

<sup>242</sup> H. Cotter, 'Art in Review: the Kids Are Alright – Photographs by Ryan McGinley', *The New York Times* (14 February 2003), accessed 30 March 2014, at [www.nytimes.com/2003/02/14/arts/art-in-review-the-kids-are-alright-photographs-by-ryan-mcginley.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/14/arts/art-in-review-the-kids-are-alright-photographs-by-ryan-mcginley.html).

<sup>243</sup> V. Aletti, 'Musical Chair', *New Yorker* (29 January 2007), 22; examples of McGinley's editorial commissions include *Vogue*, *Harpers' Bazaar*, *W magazine* and *The New York Times' T Magazine*. Advertising work includes: Mercedes Benz Fashion Week, Stella McCarthy, Uniglo, Nina Ricci and Missoni (information correct as of 29 March 2014).

emerging nude from water at night. In the top image, an Asian-American woman rides on a Caucasian man's shoulders. The image below shows both of them shoulders up in a conversation with a blond man. The unselfconscious scene is convivial and the participants' nudity is joyful but not overtly sexual. *Dan and Eric*, from 2001, similarly show two young male artists asleep in a soiled blanket under hanging laundry together in a bed (figure 2). McGinley's clean, bright light grants the image of potential squalor a welcoming sensibility. McGinley describes his process for this early work as a 'fly on the wall shooting what was going on in my life, which was very spontaneous and exciting'.<sup>244</sup> This quote demonstrates McGinley's intimate inclusion within the social networks that he depicted, thereby refuting stereotypical notions of fans as anti-social and socially ostracised (pp. 70-71).

### *Irregular Regulars*

While McGinley was producing a series documenting his friendships, he was regularly attending Morrissey concerts. As his work evolved, he continued to follow Morrissey tours before developing *Irregular Regulars* as a conscious series. Between 2004 and 2007, he attended approximately 220 Morrissey concerts in the United States, United Kingdom, France and Mexico.<sup>245</sup> During the performances in outdoor stadiums and smaller indoor venues, McGinley photographed crowds of fans, individual fans and the performers on stage. The twenty photographs displayed in Manhattan in 2007 were untitled and identified only by number.<sup>246</sup> They share strong colours created by stage lights and McGinley's distinctive printing process, described further in this chapter, as well as subject matter. Although Morrissey expressed admiration for McGinley's work and granted him permission to freely photograph his shows, McGinley chose to retain a mindful and conspicuous distance from the singer.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> R. McGinley, *Interviews 2* (Berlin, 2008), 195.

<sup>245</sup> Personal interview with J. Freire, director of Team Gallery, New York (17 April 2007). Confirmation by R. McGinley (23 June 2009). Research for this thesis included viewing McGinley's archives of thousands of negatives taken at these concerts. These images have not been printed. McGinley's decision to limit the series to twenty images was not discussed.

<sup>246</sup> R. McGinley, 'Irregular Regulars' (4 January – 10 February 2007) at Team, 83 Grand Street, New York, N.Y. 10013.

The title *Irregular Regulars* is drawn from Morrissey's term for his fans.<sup>248</sup> Since this term is not generally used for fans of other celebrities, McGinley's title serves a dual function of both specifying his subjects' identities as Morrissey fans and adopting the meanings of this term that Morrissey implies when addressing his audience. The term alludes to fans' marginalisation within larger social structures and the community allegiances that fandom affords them. Fan Studies scholars refer to these as 'communities of elective belonging'.<sup>249</sup> The term also signals the hierarchy of fandom in which audiences' attention is directed at the celebrity inspiring their bonds. This meaning is evoked due to its reference to 'The Baker Street Irregulars', a gang of Arab street urchins in Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes mystery series who spy for Holmes.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, the term is taken from military terminology for soldiers recruited from indigenous populations by the English to fight.<sup>251</sup> This final allusion complicates Morrissey's potential meanings but might indicate a sense of common purpose unifying his fans from diverse backgrounds. Thus, taking all these meanings together, this term establishes a premise that fandom is perceived by Morrissey as an active form of insidious social resistance. Music scholar Simon Frith supports this attitude with his assertion that 'rock is *used* by its listeners as a folk music – it articulates communal values, comments on shared social problems'.<sup>252</sup> Frith's observation applies to Morrissey's appeal and to the shared identity narrative

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<sup>247</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'Ryan McGinley Talks about His Photographs of Morrissey with Ana Finel Honigman', *artnet.com* (10 February 2007), accessed 27 February 2014 [artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/honigman/honigman1-31-07.asp](http://artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/honigman/honigman1-31-07.asp).

<sup>248</sup> The precise dates and origins of this term are believed to be Lyon, 2002 but are debated in online fan forums, for example: [morrisey-solo.com/threads/76407-the-official-quot-Morrissey-post-tour-quot-depression-thread?p=625769#post625769](http://morrisey-solo.com/threads/76407-the-official-quot-Morrissey-post-tour-quot-depression-thread?p=625769#post625769) (accessed 27 February 2014) and [morrisey-solo.com/archive/index.php/t-77887.html](http://morrisey-solo.com/archive/index.php/t-77887.html) (accessed 28 February 2014); D. Spiotta, 'Ryan McGinley', *The Believer* 6, no. 2 (February 2008), 56.

<sup>249</sup> B.J. Longhurst, G. Bagnall and M. Savage, 'Place, Elective Belonging and the Diffused Audience', in J. Gray, C. Sandvoss and C. L. Harrington (eds.), *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 125–138.

<sup>250</sup> M. Dirda, "'On Glancing over My Notes": Some Reflections on Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street Irregulars', *Baker Street Journal* 50, no. 2 (2000), pp. 6–17; R. Jann, 'Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body', *ELH* 57, no. 3 (1990), 696.

<sup>251</sup> R.M. Cassidy, 'The Long Small War: Indigenous Forces for Counterinsurgency', *Parameters* 36, no. 2 (2006), 47.

<sup>252</sup> S. Frith, "'The Magic That Can Set You Free": The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community', *Popular Music* 1 (1981), 159.

of his audience, including McGinley. Audience unity is a principle theme of his series.<sup>253</sup>

Fandom is not a subject that McGinley portrays elsewhere in his work nor is Morrissey a known influence on the artists and friends whom he frequently portrayed in his early photography. Similarly, the subculture surrounding Morrissey is not congruent with the subcultural associations of McGinley's social network, which primarily focus on African-American and Latino-American hip-hop culture.<sup>254</sup> In addition, references to hip-hop, blue grass, death metal and other musical subgenres can be traced in his subjects' art and public identities. However McGinley's fan allegiance to Morrissey defines his individual identity.<sup>255</sup> In this context, as discussed later in this chapter, McGinley's fan identification with Morrissey provides a way for him to articulate and assert his identity as a working-class, first-generation, Irish gay man.

In accordance with his general working practices, McGinley created the palette for *Irregular Regulars* by exposing his unused analogue film to daylight, television rays and sunsets before shooting with only concert production lights.<sup>256</sup> Additionally, he printed the series using various colour filters and the colours summoned from the film's manipulation vary. Some of McGinley's photographs exhibit high-contrast light and dark sections. These contrasts isolate single subjects from their surroundings and cast them in one reigning colour (ie: figure 15). Other images are consistently soft with individual figures melding into their environments and free-floating colour, emanating from the stage, dominates the image (ie: figure 6). For example, *Untitled (Morrissey 16)* (figure 17) shows white light engulfing a crowd and leaving only vague outlines of individual fans' faces encircled by muted rainbows of colour. A

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<sup>253</sup> D. Spiotta, 'Ryan McGinley', *The Believer* 6, no. 2 (February 2008), 56.

<sup>254</sup> Personal interview with Dash Snow (date unknown 2003).

<sup>255</sup> Personal interview.

<sup>256</sup> D. Spiotta, 'Ryan McGinley', 55.

critic described these effects as ‘ecstatic’,<sup>257</sup> because the colours and light distribution resemble optical shifts during states of suspended consciousness or drug euphoria.<sup>258</sup>

In the context of *Irregular Regulars*, these effects evocatively represent McGinley’s euphoria during Morrissey concerts and his deployment of usual light characterises insularity of the community he depicts. Crowd shots in *Irregular Regulars* portray the variety of Morrissey’s fan base. However, he focuses his camera on young and attractive subjects who resemble himself and his friends, as seen in his earlier images. In addition to seeking subjects who echo his identification with Morrissey, McGinley photographs fans whose intense emotional response represents his own fan feelings. These subjects serve as surrogates for his emotional experiences during the concerts. As he explains, he selects ‘the fan who is either in hysterics, screaming the lyrics at the top of their lungs, or hypnotized by Morrissey on stage’.<sup>259</sup> These subjects’ emotional register appears extreme but is consistent with behaviour associated with fans since Beatlemania, described in Chapter One (2.8 iii).<sup>260</sup>

The first numbered image in *Irregular Regulars* is the only literal self-portrait in the series, as well as the only image containing Morrissey’s face. Four others images, *Untitled (Morrissey 1)* (figure 3), *Untitled (Morrissey 12)* (figure 14), *Untitled (Morrissey 17)* (figure 18) and *Untitled (Morrissey 20)* (figure 19) depict Morrissey as he performs. In *Untitled (Morrissey 12)*, the singer is shot from below and seen with his leg raised mid-kick while his hand blocks his face. For *Untitled (Morrissey 17)*, McGinley shot Morrissey on stage with his face entirely obscured with a light above defining his silhouette and producing a long shadow occupying the greatest portion of the photograph. Printed with a split field filter, *Untitled (Morrissey 17)* has

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<sup>257</sup> D. Spiotta, ‘Ryan McGinley’, 45.

<sup>258</sup> D. Shinar, ‘Drug Effects and Their Significance for Traffic Safety’, *Transportation Research Circular No. E-C096: Drugs and Traffic: A Symposium* (May 2006), 52–64; N. Cunningham, ‘Hallucinogenic Plants of Abuse’, *Emergency Medicine Australasia* 20, no. 2 (2008), 167–174; G.R. Greer and R. Tolbert, ‘A Method of Conducting Therapeutic Sessions with MDMA’, *Journal of psychoactive drugs* 30, no. 4 (1998), 371–379.

<sup>259</sup> Lecture, ‘Ryan McGinley in Conversation with Gerald Matt and Synne Genzmer’ (14 September 2007), at Kunsthalle Wien, Verlag de Buchhandlung Walther Konig, Cologne.

<sup>260</sup> T. Lempert and M. Bauer, ‘Mass Fainting at Rock Concerts’, *New England Journal of Medicine* 332, no. 25 (1995), 1721.

a magenta colouration as a result of stage lighting.<sup>261</sup> This image's perspective can be misinterpreted as evidence that McGinley utilised special access to Morrissey when producing *Irregular Regulars*. Instead, the photograph's production demonstrates his solidarity with fans without dual identities as subculture celebrities. *Untitled (Morrissey 17)* is also the sole image in the series denoting McGinley's recognition of Morrissey as a performer acting in a fabricated context, reflecting Graw's acknowledgement that fans willingly suspend their awareness that celebrities are constructs.<sup>262</sup> Inclusion of this image in the series signals McGinley's critical distance from his subject and underscores Graw's assertion that a fan's recognition of a celebrity as a largely mediated cultural construct does not diminish the intensity of the fan's emotional attachment.<sup>263</sup>

The remaining images in *Irregular Regulars* are portraits of individual fans framed by his or her community and sweeping shots of assembled crowds. Many of the crowd images evoke scenes of religious worship through their colouration, light and composition.<sup>264</sup> Thus, *Untitled (Morrissey 3)* (figure 5), *Untitled (Morrissey 4)* (figure 6), *Untitled (Morrissey 8)* (figure 10) and *Untitled (Morrissey 16)* (figure 17) contain fans in recognisable postures of reverence. Fans are clustered in *Untitled (Morrissey 4)* and they raise their arms as if in supplication. Similarly, only fans' upturned hands are seen in *Untitled (Morrissey 8)*. In *Untitled (Morrissey 3)*, a densely packed crowd is submerged in golden yellow<sup>265</sup> emanating from the stage and their arms are raised as if to receive it, alluding to Pentecostal imagery of arms raised towards heaven.<sup>266</sup> *Untitled (Morrissey 3)* has similar colouration and depicts a line of transfixed fans;

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<sup>261</sup> 'A split field filter is a rotating filter (just like a circular polarizer) that allows you to move the element in the filter to cover the area you are trying to affect' – M. Speed, *The Ultimate How to Photography Guide* (Nashville: Book Pubber, 2014), 45.

<sup>262</sup> I. Graw, *High Price*, 162.

<sup>263</sup> I. Graw, *High Price*, 162.

<sup>264</sup> B.A. Weightman, 'Sacred Landscapes and the Phenomenon of Light', *Geographical Review* (October 1996), 59–71.

<sup>265</sup> A discussion of golden light in Christian iconography can be found in: J. Hall and K. Clark, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Bloomsbury, 1979), 2.

<sup>266</sup> P. Schoonderwoerd, "'Shall We Sing a Song for You?': Mediation, Migration and Identity in Football Chants and Fandom', *Soccer & Society* 12, no. 1 (2011), 121; D. Moore, 'Raves and the Bohemian Search for Self and Community: a Contribution to the Anthropology of Public Events', *Anthropological Forum* 7, no. 2 (1995), 198.

however, this photograph focuses on one young man leaning further ahead than the others.<sup>267</sup> The central subject's attire, haircut and facial features resemble Morrissey as he holds his hands to his face, adopting a pose reminiscent of a Christian prayer position. These emblems of fan worship express McGinley's adoration of Morrissey, as well as depicting the fans' and the celebrity's shared religious upbringing. Fandom unity is the central theme of other images, such as *Untitled (Morrissey 8)* (figure 10), in which McGinley expresses solidarity with other fans by intimately shooting the face of a fan looking at Morrissey. In those images, McGinley is positioned as a participant shooting from within the crowd. In *Untitled (Morrissey 8)*, he is physically level with other fans as he focuses his attention on their shared position towards Morrissey.

A more explicitly autobiographic image is *Untitled (Morrissey 6)* (figure 8) since it shows McGinley's then-boyfriend standing under fluorescent light among the after-show debris.<sup>268</sup> In contrast to *Untitled (Morrissey 6)*, McGinley's other portraits were taken of anonymous strangers during the shows, many of whom were unaware of McGinley's camera. However, no visual clues within the image indicate the intimate relationship between McGinley and *Untitled (Morrissey 6)*, therefore the image does not disrupt McGinley's focus on fandom as manifest in his identification with Morrissey and the 'feeling (sic) of togetherness and shared passion' between fans.<sup>269</sup> The only indication in *Irregular Regulars* of a narrative and drama beyond fan expression is *Untitled (Morrissey 10)* (figure 12). This is the sole image showing a fan confronting McGinley's camera. The subject, seen from afar in dark light, appears to stare directly at McGinley, focusing his attention on the photographer rather than the performer. Erotic and subcultural undertones in this image will be explored later in this chapter.

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<sup>267</sup> For descriptions of light and colour in Christian symbolism see: J. Gage, 'Colour in History: Relative and Absolute', *Art History* 1, no. 1 (1978), 104–130; A.W. Steffler, *Symbols of the Christian Faith* (Michigan, 2002), 8; J. Gage, *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (California, 1999), 26.

<sup>268</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'Ryan McGinley Talks about His Photographs of Morrissey Concerts with Ana Finel Honigman', *Saatchi Online* (10 February 2007), accessed 31 March 2014 at [magazine.saatchiart.com/culture/reports-from/los-angeles-reports-from/post\\_15](http://magazine.saatchiart.com/culture/reports-from/los-angeles-reports-from/post_15).

<sup>269</sup> R.L. Hill, 'Reconceptualising Hard Rock and Metal Fans as a Group: Imaginary Community', *International Journal of Community Music* (Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York, 2014), 2; C.S. Stevens, 'Buying Intimacy', *Fanning the Flames: Fans and Consumer Culture in Contemporary Japan* 19, (2004), 10.

In McGinley's other portraits, the fans are intensely fixated on Morrissey despite the close proximity of McGinley's camera.<sup>270</sup> These images depict fans experiencing the rapture characteristic of Beatlemania.<sup>271</sup> *Untitled (Morrissey 13)* (figure 15), for example, is a close-range orange, red and yellow portrait of a young man with an awestruck expression. Similar lighting is applied in *Untitled (Morrissey 11)* (figure 13), a portrait of a hefty boy with a crew cut. Beatlemania-like resonances are clearest in *Untitled (Morrissey 5)* (figure 7), in which McGinley presses his camera close to a glassy-eyed androgynous face with mouth open like the hysterical girls discussed in Chapter One (2.8 iii). Close correspondences with fashion worn during the early stages of Beatlemania are apparent in the personal dress of subjects in *Untitled (Morrissey 9)* (figure 11) and *Untitled (Morrissey 15)* (figure 16). The girl in *Untitled (Morrissey 15)* wears heavy eye make-up and has a teased hairstyle, consistent with fashion from the early 1960s, yet her serene expression contradicts the mania associated with early Beatles fans.

### **Critical Reception of McGinley's Artworks and Fandom**

Newspaper coverage of *Irregular Regulars* interprets the series as an unmitigated expression of fans' emotional investment in Morrissey. However, the few critics specifically focusing on this series overlook McGinley's subjective fandom relationship with the singer. Although interviewers engaging McGinley, such as Dana Spiotta for *The Believer*, discuss his fan feelings for Morrissey, reviewers relying strictly on the work for their interpretation of his focus perceive the series as an objective, documentary presentation of other fans' enthusiasm. A reviewer for *New York Press*, for example, describes the series as expressing 'fans' awe of their idol'.<sup>272</sup> Writing for the *New York Times*, critic Ken Johnson includes mention of *Irregular Regulars* with the assessment:

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<sup>270</sup> D. Spiotta, 'Ryan McGinley', 55.

<sup>271</sup> E. Davies, 'Psychological Characteristics of Beatle Mania', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30, no. 2 (1969), 273–280.

<sup>272</sup> J. Pompeo, 'The More He Ignores Them', *New York Press* (4 July 2007), accessed 8 October 2014 at [www.nypress.com/the-more-he-ignores-them/](http://www.nypress.com/the-more-he-ignores-them/).

Ryan McGinley's blurry, blue-toned images of a crowd watching a Morrissey concert ... tries to say something about the nature of mass fandom. In this context there is an over-intellectualized lifelessness to [his] efforts.<sup>273</sup>

Johnson's dismissal of *Irregular Regulars* reveals, in response to the third research question for this thesis, why McGinley's fandom is relevant to the series' integrity. As specified in the introduction and final page of Chapter One, fandom is defined in this thesis as an 'emotionally involved consumption of a given narrative or text'.<sup>274</sup> Johnson's interpretation of McGinley's images as 'over-intellectualized' is based on an assumption that McGinley is not a fan himself, but commenting on fandom through symbolism illustrating fan theory. The following section employs evidence from McGinley's art and public statements to support an interpretation of *Irregular Regulars* as an emotionally motivated series.

### **McGinley's Attitude to Fandom and Himself As a Fan As Seen in His Art**

#### ***Religious Iconography and Fandom in "Irregular Regulars"***

A critic for the *Village Voice* included a comparison with *Irregular Regulars* in a review of photographs documenting Christian rock concerts, demonstrating visual confluence between fandom and faith in McGinley's work.<sup>275</sup> Earlier descriptions of religious allusions in *Irregular Regulars* presented examples of how McGinley described his emotional investment with Morrissey using the language of faith. His public statements about his work supported this interpretation. In 2007, he told an interviewer:

I couldn't believe how someone so far away could speak so directly to me. How [Morrissey] could speak so simply, addressing so many of the issues I was dealing with... He has a way of saying exactly what I need to hear.<sup>276</sup>

McGinley's description of his emotional attachment to Morrissey adheres with

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<sup>273</sup> K. Johnson, 'Who Shot Rock & Roll: Every Picture Tells a Story, Don't It?', *New York Times* (30 October 2009), accessed 8 October 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C04E7DA143BF933A05753C](http://www.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C04E7DA143BF933A05753C).

<sup>274</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 8.

<sup>275</sup> Z. Baron, 'Behold the Delightfully Emo/Christian Rock Cover to the Hold Steady's New Heaven Is Whenever', *Village Voice* (15 March 2010), accessed 8 October 2014 at [www.blogs.villagevoice.com/music/2010/03/here\\_is\\_the\\_del.php](http://www.blogs.villagevoice.com/music/2010/03/here_is_the_del.php).

<sup>276</sup> C. Bollen, 'McGinley's Morrissey', *V Magazine* (January 2007), 34.

scholarly observations of fans equating celebrities with sages and mystical figures.<sup>277</sup> As an evocation of his early attachment to Morrissey and a representation of his identification with Morrissey's biography, persona and music, *Irregular Regulars* draws correspondences between Christian religious iconography and fans at Morrissey concerts. As McGinley states:

... there is an element of idol-worship to [*Irregular Regulars*]. [These photographs] are really about the gaze, the energy and the worship of a rock star... Anyone into music can understand what it is like to be a fan. It's about worshipping something.<sup>278</sup>

In this quote, he explains that his intention when composing *Irregular Regulars* was to simultaneously convey his personal idolisation of Morrissey and the worshipping aspects of fandom, regardless of object. This ambition is achieved because Morrissey is absent from the majority of images in the series. Instead, fans' unspecified enthusiasm is expressed as the series' general theme, although specific images that include Morrissey present the singer as a deified object of adoration. Therefore, as a whole, *Irregular Regulars* functions as a specific and general comment on fandom.

### ***Sexual Identity and Celebrity Identification***

As addressed in Chapter One (1.2), celebrities can engender the social integration of disempowered groups through representation. During McGinley's childhood and adolescence, Morrissey, according to music scholar Simon Watney, was an embodiment of alternative sexualities beyond a heteronormative paradigm.<sup>279</sup> Music scholar Elizabeth Woronzoff concurs:

... in the context of the 1980s, Morrissey's image and the space he created offered a negotiated discourse to young heterosexual and gay fans, thus

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<sup>277</sup> J. Maltby et al, 'Thou Shalt Worship', 1157–1172; J. Maltby, 'Celebrity and Religious Worship: a Refinement', *The Journal of Psychology* 138, no. 3 (2004), 286–288; M. Duffett, 'False Faith or False Comparison? A Critique of the Religious Interpretation of Elvis Fan Culture', *Popular Music and Society* 26, no. 4 (2003), 513–522; G.S. Stever, 'Celebrity Worship: Critiquing a Construct', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 41, no. 6 (2011), 1356–1370.

<sup>278</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'Ryan McGinley Talks'.

<sup>279</sup> S. Watney, 'Queer Epistemology: Activism, "Outing", and the Politics of Sexual Identities', *Critical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1994), 23.

providing a counter-cultural narrative to the dominant discourses surrounding sexuality and gender.<sup>280</sup>

Although ambiguous and evasive, Morrissey's public proclamations of a polymorphous sexual identity and frequent references to gay sexual culture in his songs enabled fans to comfortably explore their sexual identities through his music and fan community.<sup>281</sup> In interviews, McGinley cites Morrissey as an influence on the formation of his sexual identity<sup>282</sup> and he alludes to the importance of sexuality in his experience of fandom in *Untitled (Morrissey 10)* (figure 12). For example, the ambiguous narrative in *Untitled (Morrissey 10)* reflects McGinley's emulation of Morrissey by mimicking his subtle evocation of sexuality. As mentioned earlier, *Untitled (Morrissey 10)* is the only image in *Irregular Regulars* showing a fan acknowledging McGinley, thereby implying various many potential narratives including a romantic fantasy between McGinley and the fellow fan. Although *Untitled (Morrissey 6)* (figure 8) is a portrait of McGinley's then-boyfriend, the man does not address McGinley or his camera. He appears exhausted and introverted at the end of the show. His body is turned towards McGinley but his eyes are cast downwards and there is no recognition of intimacy between them. In contrast, *Untitled (Morrissey 10)* displays mutual attention and indicates that a shared interest in Morrissey can become the foundation for a personal connection between two disparate people. The photograph presents a Morrissey concert as a site for exploring and enacting gay identities, an observation consistent with historical accounts of Morrissey's influence on gay identity in England.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> E. Woronzoff, "'I'm Not the Man You Think I Am': Morrissey's Negotiation of Dominant Gender and Sexuality Codes", *Morrissey: Fandom, Representations and Identities* (London: Intellect, Ltd. 2011), 285.

<sup>281</sup> Morrissey, 'Statement' (19 October 2013), accessed 5 March 2014 at [www.true-to-you.net/morrissey\\_news\\_131019\\_01](http://www.true-to-you.net/morrissey_news_131019_01); P. Brett and E. Wood, 'Lesbian and Gay Music', *Electronic Musicological Review* 7 (2002), pp. 1–31; R. B. Attig, 'The Gay Voice in Popular Music', *Journal of Homosexuality* 21, no. 1–2 (1991), pp. 185–202.

<sup>282</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'Ryan McGinley Talks'.

<sup>283</sup> N. Greco, *'Only If You Are Really Interested': Celebrity, Gender, Desire and the World of Morrissey* (London: McFarland, 2011), 24.

Sociologist Julian Stringer observes that Morrissey dramatised gay identity although he publically evaded defining himself as gay or explicitly expressing sexuality.<sup>284</sup> Stringer writes, '[many of The Smiths' songs] gain their ambiguity and tension from an anxiety over whether or not to contain sexual energy'. Just as Morrissey's music contains coded references to sexual relationships between men, sexuality and sexual expression is implied but not enacted in *Irregular Regulars*. This observation is relevant for a comparison between *Untitled (Morrissey 10)* and McGinley's regular use of nudity, both male and female, in all other areas of his art and professional work. His contributions to fashion forums frequently involve nudity, as well as his personal artwork documenting friends and featured models enacting pre-planned scenes. Nudity, as expressed in the earlier discussion of *Untitled* (figure 1), is not interchangeable with sexuality in McGinley's work. His subjects are often nude but they rarely interact sexually in his art. However, the 'ambiguity and tension' implied in *Untitled (Morrissey 10)* is the inverse of the physical freedom, unselfconscious physical display and sexual promise expressed in his nude photography such as his 2005 photograph *Kiss Explosion* (figure 20). In this context, McGinley's expression of sexuality in *Irregular Regulars* is consistent with Morrissey's subtle handling of sexual subject matter in his songs and public persona.

### **Art Star Status and *Amae***

Tensions between McGinley's identities as a fan and a celebrity influence *Irregular Regulars* and its reception. His negotiation of his dual identity can be conceptualised through the theory of *amae* introduced in Chapter One (2.5). As an art star, with his own fans, he provides his audience with insights about himself through his admission of fan attachment to Morrissey. Yet, *Irregular Regulars* demonstrates the importance of McGinley's maintaining a distance between himself and Morrissey. Forthcoming chapters will compare artists who paint celebrities from life with ones who depict the celebrities they admire by using pre-existing source material, such as published photographs. Although McGinley includes Morrissey in some photographs from *Irregular Regulars*, the series does not directly engage the celebrity singer.

Instead of asserting special privilege, *Irregular Regulars* presents McGinley allying

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<sup>284</sup> J. Stringer, 'The Smiths', 22–26.

himself with fellow fans. In an interview from 2008, he articulated his sense of himself as one of a multitude of ordinary ‘irregular regular[s]’.<sup>285</sup> As previously mentioned, McGinley was granted permission to photograph shows but McGinley declined to photograph areas inaccessible to general fans.<sup>286</sup> This decision suggests that a fan’s form of *amae*, as ‘willful subordination’<sup>287</sup> satisfies psychological needs for McGinley, superseding his desire for interpersonal intimacy with Morrissey.<sup>288</sup>

McGinley appears to violate this decision in *Untitled (Morrissey I)* (figure 3), but this impression is a misreading since a detailed reading reveals that this image is a confirmation of him enacting a traditional fan dynamic. In the image, McGinley appears on stage, a few feet away from Morrissey. However, a closer look reveals a security guard’s burly arm hooked around his torso as he is forcibly evicted from the stage. The blurry blue light in the photograph renders the security guard’s arm and the image’s authentic narrative as not immediately comprehensible. At first glance, the composition of *Untitled (Morrissey I)* creates the impression that McGinley is performing on stage with Morrissey. His unbuttoned shirt and open mouth suggest that he might be an invited performer. Instead, *Untitled (Morrissey I)* confirms his unity with Morrissey’s other fans. McGinley recounts:

[With *Untitled (Morrissey I)*,] I wanted people to know that I’m doing this project because it’s something I feel very passionate about and devoted to. As much as I am a photographer, I am also a fan... Before I had access, I was just another kid jumping on the stage.<sup>289</sup>

This quote demonstrates Yano’s argument that *amae* is a hierarchical relationship with distinctive rewards.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> D. Spiotta, ‘Ryan McGinley’, 56.

<sup>286</sup> A. Finel Honigman, ‘Ryan McGinley Talks’.

<sup>287</sup> T. Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, 168.

<sup>288</sup> T. Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, 167.

<sup>289</sup> A. Finel Honigman, ‘Ryan McGinley Talks’.

<sup>290</sup> C. Yano, ‘Charisma’s Realm’, 336.

## II. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

### *Irregular Regulars* Contrasted with Phil Collins's *The World Won't Listen*

During the years when McGinley produced *Irregular Regulars*, the English conceptual artist, Phil Collins, filmed sixty Morrissey fans in Turkey, Colombia and Indonesia performing karaoke renditions of The Smiths' songs.<sup>291</sup> Fans in all three locales answered advertisements that Collins placed in local magazines. By filming these amateur participants, Collins produced a low-fi, three-part video installation, *The World Won't Listen* (2004–07) (figures 21, 22 and 23), titled after the Smiths' 1987 compilation album, the source for the singles his subjects sang for his camera. Collins began *The World Won't Listen* in Bogotá by creating a full karaoke version of the album with local musicians.<sup>292</sup> He then re-used this karaoke album in Istanbul, Jakarta and Bandung. The performances featured fans dancing and singing in front of uniform backdrops featuring fantasy vacation destinations. During these performances, Collins's camera remained stationary and did not actively intervene as a cinematographer or a director.<sup>293</sup> These technical aspects demonstrate Collins's documentarian tone and direction.

Roberta Smith, recognising these components of Collins's work in her review of *The World Won't Listen* wrote, '[It] is straightforwardly about desire and innocence and the ability of popular music to provide wisdom and solace around the globe'.<sup>294</sup> Her interpretation describes the conceptual resonance of the video, as well as its 'straightforward', unfussy aesthetics achieved by the camera's stationary position and impersonal recording of his enlisted performers. In Collins's work with Morrissey fans, he represents the globalisation of fan culture and the cultural significance of fandom across national boundaries by Collins removing himself from the presentation and enfolding the work in an apparently objective perspective. Nevertheless, Collins,

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<sup>291</sup> J. Stringer, 'The Smiths', 22–26.

<sup>292</sup> K. Bell, 'Attending Intently to You', *Art in America* (1 October 2013), accessed 1 March 2014 at [www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/attending-intently-to-you](http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/attending-intently-to-you).

<sup>293</sup> Personal interview with a representative at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery (28 February 2014).

<sup>294</sup> R. Smith, 'Art in Review: Phil Collins', *New York Times* (7 April 2006), accessed 5 March 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9501E1DD1130F934A35757C0A9609C8B63](http://www.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9501E1DD1130F934A35757C0A9609C8B63).

like McGinley, is a self-acknowledged fan of The Smiths.<sup>295</sup> But where McGinley's own fandom is the subject of his series, others' fandom is Collins's subject.

The theatrical aspects of *The World Won't Listen* adhere to karaoke's aesthetic and performative conventions. Karaoke originated in Japan in the 1960s and gained popularity internationally as a leisure activity that same decade. With its own subcultural celebrities and performance conventions,<sup>296</sup> karaoke can be interpreted as a form of creative textual productivity because its performers aspire to simultaneously embody their idols while presenting their personal interpretations of known songs and movements. However, it is a light form of fans' textual productivity, since fans are not creating entirely new projects, as they do with slash fiction. Instead, they are customising existing songs using their individual voices.<sup>297</sup> Although karaoke is regarded in the West as kitsch and often performed with irony, it functions as a medium for uncritical fan engagement.<sup>298</sup>

The participants represent a more diverse portrait of Morrissey's fans than seen in *Irregular Regulars*. Whereas McGinley selected subjects for his photographs who resemble himself and his publically known social circle, the participants in *The World Won't Listen* are conspicuously unusual. They include an androgynous pre-adolescent wearing sunglasses and a comic hat, teenagers adhering to the aesthetic conventions of the Goth subculture, a young man wearing a suit, a young woman in a *hijab* and a bare-chested young man who resembles a young Morrissey (figure 23). While some of the singers in *The World Won't Listen* are dressed like Morrissey, in slim but conventional suits, patterned shirts and plain trousers, other karaoke singers' personal

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<sup>295</sup> J. Lack, 'Artist of the Week 65: Phil Collins', *The Guardian* (25 November 2009), accessed 28 February 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/nov/24/phil-collins-artist](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/nov/24/phil-collins-artist).

<sup>296</sup> R. Drew, *Karaoke Nights: an Ethnographic Rhapsody* 10 (Toronto, 2001).

<sup>297</sup> B.J. Brown, 'Genre and the City: Tokyo's Urban Space', *Journal for Cultural Research* 12, no. 1 (2008), 11; J. Fornäs, 'Karaoke: Subjectivity, Play and Interactive Media', *Nordicom Review* 15, no. 1 (1994), 87–103; J. Matusitz and P. Payano, 'Globalisation of Popular Culture: from Hollywood to Bollywood', *South Asia Research* 32, no. 2 (2012), 123–138; B. Cogan and G. Cogan, 'Gender and Authenticity in Japanese Popular Music: 1980–2000', *Popular Music and Society* 29, no. 1 (2006), 78.

<sup>298</sup> R. Drew, "'Once More, with Irony": Karaoke and Social Class', *Leisure Studies* 24, no. 4 (2005), 371–383.

styles contradict The Smiths' image.<sup>299</sup> The singers in *The World Won't Listen* vary in age, personal presentation and talent level. This diversity spotlights their amateurism and the scope of Morrissey's appeal.

Knowledge of Collins's fandom may help to elucidate his motivation for making *The World Won't Listen*, but knowing that Collins is a fan of The Smiths and Morrissey does not radically change the experience of viewing this work or appreciating its intended message. Indeed, one critic has proposed that it is the viewer's own emotional investment in The Smiths that might determine his or her response to *The World Won't Listen* and the fans it represents.<sup>300</sup> If viewers are also fans of The Smiths, then their empathy for Collins's performers will enable them to appreciate the experience of watching them perform; however, disinterest in The Smiths can compel viewers to interpret the work as an objective or critical commentary on fandom as aberrant enthusiasm. Therefore, the fandom of the audience for *The World Won't Listen* determines interpretations of the work and responses to the amateur performers' expressions of their fandom. Although possible evidence for Collins' fandom in *The World Won't Listen* will be presented later in this section, on the surface Collins's fandom is inconsequential to this work and its reception because he purposefully removes himself from the series. This is in contrast to McGinley, who aspires to evoke his subjective emotional response to Morrissey through his aesthetic choices.

Collins's interest in amateurs' subjective expression is consistent with his artistic framework and focus throughout his career. He explores amateurs' engagement with mainstream and professional media in separate projects during the first decade of the twenty-first century.<sup>301</sup> *Shady Lane Productions* (2005) and *The Return of the Real* (2005) represent these interests as Collins' contribution to the 2006 Turner Prize exhibition. These related projects jointly present participants' autobiographical stories

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<sup>299</sup> J. Stringer, 'The Smiths', 16–26.

<sup>300</sup> C. Rees, 'Phil Collins: the World Won't Listen', *Glasstire: Texas Visual Arts* (1 March 2008), accessed 4 March 2014 at [www.glasstire.com/2008/03/01/phil-collins-the-world-wont-listen/](http://www.glasstire.com/2008/03/01/phil-collins-the-world-wont-listen/).

<sup>301</sup> A. Kear, 'Intensities of Appearance', *Performance Research* 13, no. 4 (2008); C.M.G. Leith, A. Renton and D. Chandler, *Phil Collins: I Only Want You To Love Me* (Brighton, 2004).

of having felt exploited and misrepresented by reality television producers.<sup>302</sup> In contrast to the relationship between the pop culture industry and amateurs that Collins develops in these projects, his earlier work presented fandom as empowering amateurs. Collins filmed ordinary Iraqis in Baghdad in 2002, as they posed silently for imaginary screen tests. In 2004, he produced *They Shoot Horses*, two seven-hour recordings of a disco dance marathon in Ramallah. In these projects, Collins explores the impact of Western popular culture on fantasies and personal expression in countries experiencing conflict and oppression.<sup>303</sup> The cross-cultural content in *The World Won't Listen* inspired critic Laura Cerizza to describe Collins's series as being about 'displacement, if not a pop-cultural transplantation'.<sup>304</sup> She recognises that the fans in Collins' film create new, progressive, contexts for The Smiths' work.

In his own critique of the singers' performances, Collins described *The World Won't Listen* as representing 'the sweet agony of self-fulfilment and self-limitation'.<sup>305</sup>

Putting aside the political ramifications of fans adopting Western music as their identifier, which some theorists describe as concern with cultural imperialism, Collins's assessment proposes that fandom is predicated on a need for escapist fantasy rather than progressive identity formation.<sup>306</sup> Although he shares a personal emotional investment in Morrissey and The Smiths with the fans in his video, Collins exposed his subjects' fandom to criticism from unsympathetic viewers seeking to mock the fans' appearances, performances and enthusiasm. In consequence, critical response to the fans' performances ranged from mocking to empathetic and laudatory.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> A. Sooke, 'Phil Collins: Turn the Tables on Reality TV', *The Telegraph* (31 October 2007), accessed on 1 April 2014 at [www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3668916/Phil-Collins-Turn-the-tables-on-reality-TV.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3668916/Phil-Collins-Turn-the-tables-on-reality-TV.html); S. Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (London, 2012).

<sup>303</sup> A. Kear, 'Intensities of Appearance', 18.

<sup>304</sup> L. Cerizza, 'The Disconcerting Eye', *Frieze.de* (6 October 2012), 11.

<sup>305</sup> L. Cerizza, 'The Disconcerting Eye', 11.

<sup>306</sup> D. Laing, 'The Music Industry and the Cultural Imperialism "Thesis"', *Media, Culture & Society* 8, no. 3 (1986), 331–341; R. Garofalo, 'Whose World, What Beat: the Transnational Music Industry, Identity, and Cultural Imperialism', *The World of Music* 35, no. 2 (1993), 16–32; C. Roach, 'Cultural Imperialism and Resistance in Media Theory and Literary Theory', *Media, Culture & Society* 19, no. 1 (1997), 47–66.

<sup>307</sup> S. Jeffries, 'Fastest! Tallest! Marxist! The Visual Art of Phil Collins', *The Guardian* (6 February 2011), accessed on 5 March 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/feb/06/marxist-visual-art-phil-collins](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/feb/06/marxist-visual-art-phil-collins); 'Art Review: Phil Collins, the World Won't Listen', *The Scotsman* (24 April 2009),

Despite Collins's directorial objectivity and self-distancing from his fellow fans, *The World Won't Listen* can be interpreted as a fan's homage to Morrissey because it gives an emotion-based plausible explanation for why the singer has offered solace to alienated or marginalised individuals in disparate parts of the world. Tensions between 'the global and the local', as manifest in the international reach of Morrissey's music contrasting with participants' race in *The World Won't Listen*, demonstrate Fiske's assertion that fans empower themselves by appropriating elements of pop culture to suit their own needs despite the intentions of the industry that produced it.<sup>308</sup> As previously discussed with regards to Morrissey's inspiration for McGinley's aesthetics and the themes in his imagery, including expressions of religiosity and sexuality, connections can be drawn between themes in *The World Won't Listen* and Morrissey's lyrics, media persona and cultural influence. Scholars, like Martin J. Power, argue that Morrissey's engagement with themes of ethnicity, disability, sexuality and class in his music and public identity empower his fans to engage with these concerns in their personal lives.<sup>309</sup> As Power asserts, Morrissey's stance against class constructs and oppression have seemingly led Latino fans in the United States 'to [find] a kindred spirit in the Northern proletarian lad'.<sup>310</sup> McGinley's attachment to Morrissey reflects similar connections to his music. The fans' relationships with Morrissey suggest a retooling of the stereotypes equating fandom itself with negative cultural class biases – as discussed in Chapter One (pp. 74-76).

Collins' use of The Smiths' song lyrics and their album title indicates another set of linkages between the karaoke singers' cultural contexts and Morrissey's biography, which transcend national identities. Collins, like McGinley, does not present

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accessed on 4 March 2014 at [www.scotsman.com/news/art-review-phil-collins-the-world-won-t-listen-1-1352042](http://www.scotsman.com/news/art-review-phil-collins-the-world-won-t-listen-1-1352042).

<sup>308</sup> J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 23.

<sup>309</sup> M.J. Power, A. Dillane and E. Devereux, 'A Push and a Shove and the Land Is Ours: Morrissey's Counter-Hegemonic Stance(s) on Social Class', *Critical Discourse Studies* 9, no. 4 (2012), 375–392.

<sup>310</sup> M.J. Power, 'The "Teenage Dad" and "Mums" Are Just "Certain People That I Know": Counter Hegemonic Representations of the Working / Underclass in the Works of Morrissey', in E. Devereux, A. Dillane and M.J. Power, eds., *Morrissey: Fandom, Representations and Identities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 102.

Morrissey as a blank screen onto which fans project polysemic meanings of their own creation.<sup>311</sup> Instead, he shows how fans present and customise existing meanings within their admired texts to express their identities. He does this by showing how Morrissey's fans actively resist dominant cultural statements about gender, sexual expression and emotional expression through their fandom. Thus, the fans featured in Collins's video use karaoke to remake Morrissey's messages of resistance into their own. For them, being a fan of Morrissey is similar to being a Brony, as discussed in the previous chapter (p. 80). For these fans, their use of pop culture contributes new meanings to their source material. They are also like the Depeche Mode fans that Deller depicted. Evidence of ties between Morrissey's work and his fans' needs provides credibility to an interpretation of *The World Won't Listen* as Collins's tribute to Morrissey's ability to resonate with a wide range of fans. But the project's stance says little about the singer's resonance for Collins, unlike McGinley's *Irregular Regulars*, but like Deller's detached observation of Depeche Mode fans. In contrast to *Irregular Regulars*, which presents Morrissey and his fans through the prism of McGinley's emotions, reverence, identity and experiences as a fan, Collins's work is an intellectual and not an emotionally evocative argument. However, there is no evidence in *The World Won't Listen* to demonstrate Collins' fan investment in Morrissey. McGinley's work illustrates Sandvoss's premise that fandom is a form of self-portraiture. However, in contrast, Collins's series mirrors Fiske's theory of fans' textual production as a form of protest and resistance to political repression.<sup>312</sup> Traces of Collins's fandom can be discerned in *The World Won't Listen* but they are not the work's foremost concern. Instead, distinctions in presentation and focus between McGinley's photographic series and Collins's videos highlight differences between aca-fan scholarship and ethnographic studies of fandom.

### ***Irregular Regulars* Contrasted with Candice Breitz's Fan Video Portraits**

A further comparison for McGinley's intense exploration of his personal fandom is the 2005–06 trilogy by South African video artist Candice Breitz (b. Johannesburg, 1972–). Her *Working Class Hero (A Portrait of John Lennon)*, *King (A Portrait of Michael Jackson)* (figure 24) and *Queen (A Portrait of Madonna)* (figure 25) consist

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<sup>311</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 126.

<sup>312</sup> J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 11.

of single-screen videos showing fans performing, *a cappella*, entire karaoke albums by their respective celebrity icons. Unlike McGinley and Collins, Breitz has not declared any fan affinity for the celebrities she references in her work. She does not discuss her emotional investment in these celebrities during interviews and there is no discernible evidence of emotional attachment to pop material in Breitz's art. Instead of explicitly evocating or implicitly presenting personal fan affinities, Breitz's videos focus on the fans of three celebrities whose international cultural importance is globally recognised. Her project can therefore act as a generic statement about fandom and fame because the celebrity figures she selects are objectively, not subjectively, determined due to their broad popularity.<sup>313</sup> However, Breitz's project focuses on fans, not celebrities. Her titles demonstrate that celebrities are constructs elected into importance, like prom kings and queens, because of their fans' interest, admiration and dedication.

Each group in Breitz's trilogy consists of participants sharing fantasies of merging their identities with their musical idols' personas as forms of fan identification discussed in Chapter One (pp. 55-59). *Queen (A Portrait of Madonna)* (figure 25), for example, is an approximately seventy minute long video series featuring 30 Italian participants. While the fans sing in unison and move in accordance with routines originally choreographed for their idol, they are not mere impersonators. They are distinguishable from one another by their personal presentation, attire and affect and the props that they brought to the filming.<sup>314</sup> One waves a fancy wand, another sports a feather boa, a man dons a turquoise Mohawk with glittering eye shadow and another man wears a cowboy hat. Although these props evoke Madonna's flamboyant style, aesthetic and reference the camp components of gay culture – a strong influence for Madonna – none of the performers directly mimic her or replicate recognisable costumes from her performances.<sup>315</sup> Instead of aiming to resemble Madonna, they

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<sup>313</sup> R. Burnett, *The Global Jukebox: the International Music Industry* (London, 1996), 119; W.J. Brown and B.P. Fraser, 'Global Identification with Celebrity Heroes', *Heroes in a Global World* (2007), 30–44; P. Hollander, 'Michael Jackson, the Celebrity Cult, and Popular Culture', *Society* 47, no. 2 (2010), 147.

<sup>314</sup> C. Lange, 'Crazy for You: Candice Breitz on Pop Idols & Portraiture', *Modern Painters* (September 2005), 68.

<sup>315</sup> S. Andermahr, 'A Queer Love Affair? Madonna and Lesbian and Gay Culture', *The Good, the Bad and the Gorgeous: Popular Culture's Romance with Lesbianism* (London, 1994), 28–35.

strive to merge their identities with their emulated idol for the duration of the songs or album, but return to being themselves once the song ends. When Breitz exhibited each video, she synchronised the fans' voices, facial expressions and body language. Although each performer is only seen from the neck up and isolated on his or her own separate television screen, they are all shot against uniform backdrops and together create a blended sound. The fans' identities appear comprised of their chosen celebrity's influence, their own physical presences and input into their performances and their communal identity, as a fan group. Breitz expresses these multiple identities through her organisation of the fans' images.

Breitz's objective attitude towards celebrities is expressed in her clinical presentation of her videos and their sparse aesthetic. The fans in *The World Won't Listen* perform before gaudy backdrops, whereas Breitz presents her fans performing against black or grey backgrounds. Collins filmed his fans performing in environments seeming to be an authentic karaoke stage but Breitz creates a custom set, which distinguishes her work as artwork whereas his appears like a documentary. These aesthetic differences, as seen in forthcoming case studies and comparisons in the next three chapters, influence how fandom is perceived and artwork about fandom is interpreted. For Breitz, her clinical composition and emotionally removed aesthetic is coherent with her concept.

According to Breitz, her work is compelling because it shows 'more about how the individuals portrayed would like to be seen, than who these individuals actually are'.<sup>316</sup> The fans retain their identities as individuals while incorporating their emotional investment in media into their identities. They are like the fans mentioned in Chapter One (p. 56) whose memories of the films they loved were subjective. Rather than explore fans' yearning for communities of shared interests, Breitz presents fandom as a 'community of imagination'. Working from the perspective of an outsider, she represents the coincidental and peripheral kinships that McGinley evokes when he photographs strangers with whom he expresses a sense of kindred

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<sup>316</sup> S. Whitfield, 'Candice Breitz. London', *The Burlington Magazine* 147, no. 1232 (2005), 766.

interests.<sup>317</sup> In this respect, her image of fandom resembles the crowds in McGinley's photographs, which consist of individuals pressed together physically and sharing the same point of interest but each absorbed in his or her private parasocial relationship with Morrissey. Through her presentation, Breitz shows how fans willingly sublimate their core identities in the process of emulating their idol but to a limited, time-bound extent.

Breitz uses karaoke as her medium for demonstrating this perspective. Like Collins, Breitz draws analogies between karaoke's semiotics and the wider range of fan activities, attachments and expression. Although Collins and Breitz present karaoke as an experience in which a fan is isolated within his or her aspiration to emulate the idol, alternative theories propose 'karaoke's mimetic character can provide a conduit for personal growth and interpersonal empathy'.<sup>318</sup> This method functions as a light form of textual productivity, as explained in Chapter One (pp. 76-79), which gives fans pleasure from manipulating the material they admire. In this respect, karaoke can be a microcosm for fandom across its entire spectrum.

As mentioned in the introduction to her project, Breitz's trilogy showcases the enthusiasm and creativity of her subjects, some of whom are charismatic; however, there is no evidence in her work that she shares their passion for Madonna, Michael Jackson or John Lennon. In interviews, she has appeared critical of celebrities. Her project is about deconstructing the allure of celebrities, because, as she explained:

Avoiding an overtly iconic representation of the pop star is a way to suggest that the star is, on some level, a mirror in which the collective desires and fantasies of her fans are reflected, rather than some kind of fixed, unchanging entity.<sup>319</sup>

By focusing on celebrities, Breitz seeks to explore the needs they fulfil for fans and how the fans' performances in her trilogy convey, through mannerisms and vocal

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<sup>317</sup> M. Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 180.

<sup>318</sup> R. Drew, "'Once More, With Irony'", 371.

<sup>319</sup> C. Lange, 'Crazy for You', 68.

emphasis, evocative emotions alluding to different fantasies or desires ranging from jovial playfulness to the expression of unhappiness.

By approaching celebrities as a distanced construct, Breitz creates a portrait of empowered fandom. As the titles of her videos indicate, celebrities' identities are constructed through fans' composite desires and active interest. Fans then use their affinity and enthusiasm for celebrities to develop their own identities. Breitz's documentation of fans indulging in their fantasies portrays something of the joys of fandom, yet she does not share the fans' enthusiasm, as exemplified by her seemingly arbitrary selection of pop idols for the project. In contrast, Collins ties his critical exploration of the globalisation of fan culture to The Smiths' specific history and appeal to fans, while his own emotional investment in the band remains external to the meaning of his art. For McGinley, personal fan identity is at the heart of *Irregular Regulars* and the series intends to express the emotive force of his fandom as he experiences it.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter presents McGinley's *Irregular Regulars* as a self-portrait-by-proxy since McGinley uses other fans' images to represent his personal fan attachment to Morrissey. As argued in this chapter, *Irregular Regulars* is an auto-ethnographic project documenting McGinley's self-reflexivity as a Morrissey fan. Theories from Fan Studies about fans' identification with celebrities, the structure of fan communities and expressions of celebrity worship provide insight into the mechanisms of McGinley's imagery. This chapter addresses the complexity of Morrissey's artistic influence on McGinley's art, McGinley's insight into fandom and his dedication towards maintaining a parasocial, rather than interpersonal, relationship with his celebrity idol. These aspects of *Irregular Regulars* have been glossed over both by critics who acknowledge and critics who overlook McGinley's subjective investment in Morrissey.

Comparisons with artworks by Collins and Breitz further define the salient qualities of McGinley's project. These comparative case studies demonstrate that McGinley's aesthetically evocative portrayal of his subjects expresses his empathy for their emotional experiences when watching Morrissey perform. Collins's static camera and

Breitz's deadpan depiction of fans, however, remove both artists' personal perspectives from their work. These differences encourage viewers to engage with fandom and celebrity as a cultural phenomenon but not to interpret Collins's and Breitz's projects as providing insight into them. Unlike the art by the other two artists in this chapter, *Irregular Regulars* is fundamentally about McGinley expressing and sharing his unambiguously positive emotional investment in Morrissey. Using McGinley as a model for adoring fandom, the forthcoming chapters will explore how the central issues in his art – celebrity identification, tensions between being an art star and fan identity, fan expression and emotional investments in a celebrity – manifest themselves in the increasingly complex art by other artists.

As will be seen, McGinley's work differs from art by the three subjects of forthcoming chapters. His identity separates him. His gender differentiates him and influences the criticism that he receives, specifically since the other artists are routinely criticised for creating art 'like teenage girls'. This assessment will be documented in detail and analysed in sections focusing on the critical response to the artists in the following chapters. His form of fandom is also distinctive since McGinley creates images of idol worship that are uncomplicated by darker impulses – including aggression, *schadenfreude* and possessiveness. For McGinley, worship is his primary way of exacting his fandom and *Irregular Regulars* documents McGinley's belief that fans' worship of a celebrity defines their emotional investment in that figure. Yet, other elements in his art and fandom are found in the upcoming chosen artists' work – specifically identification (in terms of personal identity and creative identities – forming a kinship between the artist's work and the celebrity's persona), objectification and overt emotional investment.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### ***An Adoring Gaze: Elizabeth Peyton's Idealized Painted Portraits of Male Celebrities***

## INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Peyton (b. Danbury, Connecticut, 1965–) creates watercolours, oil paintings and drawings idealising celebrities, particularly male musicians, such as Kurt Cobain (Aberdeen, Washington, 1969–Seattle, Washington, 1994), the late lead singer of the band *Nirvana*, who are known in the public domain to engage in drug use and other forms of self-harm. Since earning public attention in the 1990s, her art has been lauded by some critics, who admire her intimate and tender portrayals of celebrities, but also critically disparaged as kitsch by others who dismiss her art as representing naïve, immature and possibly neurotic manifestations of fandom. Her detractors routinely dismiss her art as an overly flattering expression of an ‘infatuation’ with celebrity subjects. However, this thesis explores an alternative interpretation of her art as symptomatic of the aggressive aspects of fandom.<sup>320</sup> It will be argued that Peyton’s portraits of subjects whose public biographies involve scandals and demonstrations of anti-social activities embody contradictions in fandom and reflect an aca-fan sensibility.

The first section of this chapter discusses Peyton’s work and its reception in the art press, mass media and academic forums in terms of important themes expressed in her work: adolescent expression, gender identity, fandom and art star status/*amae*. The second section contains comparisons between Peyton’s artwork and work by her predecessor and peers: Andy Warhol, Rodney Graham and Banks Violette. These comparisons situate her art in its historical and contemporary context as well as highlight the ways in which her work is distinctive. As the progenitor of Pop Art, Warhol (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1928–New York, 1987) creates a historical basis for art depicting celebrities, and therefore provides a precedent for Peyton’s methods in her art and in her media self-presentation. Rather than discussing his art in previous pages, this chapter introduces Warhol’s work in recognition of the analogies drawn in

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<sup>320</sup> K. Rosenberg, ‘A Painter’s Social Network Traced in Her Photographs’, *New York Times*, 11 July 2008, accessed 21 April 2014 at [nytimes.com/2008/07/11/arts/design/11peyt.html?\\_r=0](http://nytimes.com/2008/07/11/arts/design/11peyt.html?_r=0).

mass media between his celebrity portraits and Peyton's portraits.<sup>321</sup> The video, photography, installation and sound art by Rodney Graham (b. Abbotsford, Canada, 1949–) and sculptures and drawings by Banks Violette (b. Ithaca, New York, 1973–) are direct corollaries to Peyton's paintings commemorating Graham's and Violette's admiration for Cobain using detached and objective aesthetics. In contrast to these comparative case studies, Peyton's paintings are shown to be personal and subjective.

Three paintings by Peyton will be referenced in this chapter: *Live to Ride (E.P.)* (2003) (figure 26), *Blue Liam* (1996) (figure 27) and *Morrissey after Wolfgang* (2004) (figure 28). These paintings exemplify compositions, themes and visual effects found throughout her oeuvre. They were selected for focused attention because they are frequently reproduced in media coverage of Peyton's work and they demonstrate her recognisable signature aesthetic. Her technique and conceptual concerns have remained consistent since her professional beginnings, so these works have not been selected because they represent different stages in her artistic development. Rather, they are representative examples of her work that highlight specific themes that will be discussed as they relate to upcoming concerns and contexts.

The over-riding argument of this chapter is the Peyton's paintings represent fans' identification with their idols. Her treatment of gender signifiers in her art, her alterations of her subjects' appearances, her selection of subjects and her technical choices address the first component of the second research question in this thesis: 'What scholarly recognised elements of fandom do the main four artists display in their work?' Especially important in this respect is the comparison with Warhol. Whereas Warhol faithfully depicted celebrities' faces and physiques through his silkscreening process, Peyton modifies her subjects' physical attributes to adhere to a private aesthetic ideal that feminises their features and conflates their features with her own. While Morrissey's public image influenced McGinley's aesthetic and personal development, McGinley's affinity for Morrissey reflected their biographical backgrounds and personal identities. Similarly, Peyton represents different celebrities

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<sup>321</sup> K. Johnson, 'Beautiful People Caught in Passivity by Peyton and Warhol', *New York Times* (18 August 2006), accessed 3 April 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2006/08/18/arts/design/18peyt.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/18/arts/design/18peyt.html); 'Elizabeth Peyton Brings Honor Back to Celebrities', *Huffington Post* (4 March 2012), accessed 21 April 2014 at [www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/03/elizabeth-peyton-brings-honor\\_n\\_1392362.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/03/elizabeth-peyton-brings-honor_n_1392362.html); N. Tscherny, 'Elizabeth Peyton', *Art in America* (1 February 2009), accessed 24 March 2014 at [www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/elizabeth-peyton/](http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/elizabeth-peyton/).

as extensions of herself. As a critic for the *Wall Street Journal* wrote in 2009, '[Peyton's portraits] look a lot like her: delicately featured, wispy, androgynous'.<sup>322</sup> As will be seen, this implication of identification contributes to Peyton's work as an aca-fan artist. Her art offers a representation of fandom's contradictions and complexity. While critics have previously perceived Peyton's work as expressions of uncomplicated adoration or cynicism, it will be demonstrated here that her art in fact expresses a paradoxical tension in fandom between empathy and *schadenfreude*. As such, Peyton's portraits and their critical reception reflect cultural attitudes toward fans and the role of fandom in the construction and expression of individuals' identities.

## **I. ELIZABETH PEYTON: CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS**

### **Peyton's Biographical Background and Her Signature Artistic Style**

Elizabeth Peyton was born in Danbury, Connecticut (USA) in 1965. She studied at the School for Visual Arts in New York, graduating with a Bachelors of Fine Arts degree in 1987.<sup>323</sup> In the early 1990s, she began producing charcoal or pencil portraits of commonly known historical figures such as Napoleon and Marie Antoinette. Concurrent with these works, Peyton began to depict contemporary rock musicians similarly to her images of historical figures. In the mid-1990s, she also began creating and exhibiting portraits of her personal friends. She used source material taken from the public domain, such as still images in magazines, for these portraits. Peyton cites Warhol's screen-printed portraits of film stars such as Marilyn Monroe as influences on the development of her work.<sup>324</sup> From 1991–2004, Peyton was married to Rirkrit Tiravanija, a forerunner of relational aesthetics performance / installation art.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> L. Siegel, 'Painting Faces', *Wall Street Journal* (7 February 2009), accessed 14 April 2009 at [www.online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB123396220379658633](http://www.online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB123396220379658633).

<sup>323</sup> Elizabeth Peyton's official CV, accessed 15 July 2014 at [www.gladstonegallery.com/artist/elizabeth-peyton/biography](http://www.gladstonegallery.com/artist/elizabeth-peyton/biography).

<sup>324</sup> K. Johnson, 'Beautiful People Caught in Passivity by Peyton and Warhol', *New York Times* (18 August 2006), accessed 3 April 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2006/08/18/arts/design/18peyt.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/18/arts/design/18peyt.html).

<sup>325</sup> C. Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2004), 54–56.

Following her divorce from Tiravanija, Peyton has been romantically attached only to women. She currently resides in Berlin and New York.<sup>326</sup>

Unlike some of the other artists considered in this thesis, such as McGinley who created a stand-alone series documenting his fan affinity for Morrissey as part of his broader artistic practice, Peyton depicts a wide collection of celebrities. Her selections of celebrity subjects function as a collective celebrity portrait, revealing her core creative concerns and idiosyncratic interests. Peyton's range of subjects include royals (eg: Queen Elizabeth I, Louis XIV, Napoleon, Ludwig II), rock stars (eg: Johnny Rotten, Morrissey (figure 28), John Lennon, Jarvis Cocker, Liam Gallagher (figure 27), Kurt Cobain (figures 34 and 35) and Eminem), actors (eg: Leonardo DiCaprio and Chloë Sevigny), film directors (eg: Sophie Coppola and Rainer Werner Fassbinder) and her personal friends, such as fashion designer Ange Donhauser and Peyton's gallerist, Gavin Brown. Primarily, but not exclusively, Peyton's oeuvre consists of portraits of male rock stars whom she admires. As critic Laura Cummings states: 'The main effect [of Peyton's portraits] is simply homogeneity'.<sup>327</sup> Peyton expanded the scope of her subject matter in the second decade of the twenty-first century to include still-lives, portraits of female public figures and historical figures such as Sigmund Freud, yet the style and method of her representations have remained consistent.

Peyton achieved commercial success and media attention during the 1990s and early twenty-first century. Alongside American painters John Currin and Lisa Yuskavage, through popular exhibitions and media attention, Peyton drew critical attention to traditional figurative painting following decades of dismissal by the art world.<sup>328</sup> Newspaper reports describing her as 'one of the most talked about artists of the 1990's... admired for making traditional figurative painting hip', affirm her media

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<sup>326</sup> Date written: 12 July 2014.

<sup>327</sup> L. Cummings, 'Too Cool for Art School'.

<sup>328</sup> 'Peyton Place', *Papermag* (25 September 2006), accessed 12 April 2014 at [www.papermag.com/2006/09/peyton\\_place.php](http://www.papermag.com/2006/09/peyton_place.php); B. Lewis, 'Elizabeth Peyton Is a Pin-up Painter', *Evening Standard* (July 9 2009), accessed 12 April 2014 at [www.standard.co.uk/arts/elizabeth-peyton-is-pinup-painter-7415371.html](http://www.standard.co.uk/arts/elizabeth-peyton-is-pinup-painter-7415371.html).

status.<sup>329</sup> Her commercial success was demonstrated by the 2013 sale of her portrait of Leonardo DiCaprio for an auction record of \$1million.<sup>330</sup> As a result of her commercial success and media status, Peyton qualifies as an ‘art star’, according to the definition provided by Walker that was included in the Introduction (p. 27). Confirming Peyton’s art star status, a 2009 review for *The Guardian* newspaper included the uncomplimentary statement, ‘Peyton acquired such a reputation for her wan little portraits of pop stars, art stars, dealers and collectors that her society status appears almost indivisible from theirs’.<sup>331</sup> Despite this status, Peyton’s work, like McGinley’s, glorifies and explores fans’ distant and subordinate relationship to celebrities.

Since Peyton began exhibiting her art in 1993, she has painted her subjects as variations of an idealised prototype. As a 2009 review in the *Guardian* newspaper succinctly describes, ‘Most of [Peyton’s] portraits are of men, all imbued with a cool, androgynous quality’.<sup>332</sup> Peyton’s methods of depicting her subjects exaggerate these characteristics. In Peyton’s paintings, the faces and bodies of her subjects appear longer and narrower than documented in photographs. She portrays her subjects’ cheekbones as especially prominent, which feminises masculine faces, often also adding an unhealthy angularity implying sickness or emaciation. The effect of these alternations to her subjects’ faces blurs gender differences and complies with cultural associations between ‘cool’, as a cultural affirmation, and unhealthy life-styles.<sup>333</sup> This quality is expressed by critic Jackie Wullschlager’s description that Peyton’s subjects ‘all look beautiful, young, glamorous, remote and somehow only half-alive’.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> K. Johnson, ‘Beautiful People’.

<sup>330</sup> I. Wilkinson, ‘Leonardo DiCaprio’s Big Christie’s Auction Brings in \$33 Million’, *The Daily Beast* (14 May 2013), accessed 28 March 2013 at [www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/05/14/leonardo-dicaprio-s-big-christie-s-auction-brings-in-33-million.html](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/05/14/leonardo-dicaprio-s-big-christie-s-auction-brings-in-33-million.html).

<sup>331</sup> L. Cummings, ‘Too Cool for Art School’.

<sup>332</sup> S. Ioannou, ‘Young People’s Accounts of Smoking, Exercising, Eating and Drinking Alcohol: Being Cool or Being Unhealthy?’, *Critical Public Health* 13, no. 4 (2003), 357–371.

<sup>333</sup> J. Wullschlager, ‘Elizabeth Peyton at the Whitechapel Gallery’, *Financial Times* (10 July 2009), accessed 13 April 2014 at [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d26efdd4-6ce0-11de-af56-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2zXjpvDTH](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d26efdd4-6ce0-11de-af56-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2zXjpvDTH).

<sup>334</sup> J. Wullschlager, ‘Elizabeth Peyton’.

These properties are evident in Peyton's portrait of Morrissey from 2004, *Morrissey after Wolfgang* (figure 28). She adds a red and a yellowish tint to the whites of Morrissey's eyes and his skin is slightly sallow. Underneath and around his eyes are heavy patches of jaundiced brown that match his shirt and the bark of a tree behind him. His body appears limp and frail, pressed against the tree. This image replicates the singer's pose and position from a cover shot of Morrissey for *Index*, a defunct American arts magazine in which Peyton was a regular contributor and subject.<sup>335</sup> In contrast to her portrait, Peyton's source image presents Morrissey as noticeably middle-aged but robust, with full cheeks and subtle smile. Peyton eliminates any indication of a smile and hollows the contours of the singer's face (figure 29). He appears gaunt and wizened in Peyton's portrait and the arm clutching his side creates an impression that he is experiencing physical pain.

Peyton's subject's appearance in the Morrissey portrait resembles her treatment of other celebrity subjects and her personal friends. Among her friends are art stars and celebrities whose personal lives socially intersect with Manhattan's art community.<sup>336</sup> This network includes fashion designer Marc Jacobs, actress Chloë Sevigny, film director Sophia Coppola and artists Matthew Barney and Olafur Eliasson. Her depiction of personal friends who are also celebrities complicates a clear distinction between her self-presentation as an art star and her work as a fan, yet Peyton's process when creating her portraits of friends who are also celebrities erects a conceptual boundary which keeps these works consistent. Through her process, she replicates the 'distinction between fans and celebrities', which Sandvoss describes as a necessary element in fandom.<sup>337</sup> As Peyton once explained to a reporter, she prefers to render friends using her own snap-shots, taken with a 35-millimeter, Polaroid and digital cameras, rather than live sittings; this makes the experience of painting her intimate friends equal to her copying celebrities' publically accessible images.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Morrissey cover, *Index*, February/March 2004, Issue 42.

<sup>336</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 5.

<sup>337</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 95.

<sup>338</sup> K. Rosenberg, 'A Painter's Social Network Traced in Her Photographs', *New York Times* (11 July

### Critical Reception to Peyton's Artworks and Fandom

While some critics praise Peyton for her paintings, which Walker describes as 'paradoxically, intimate portrayals of public figures',<sup>339</sup> another camp interprets Peyton's work as representing problematic elements in contemporary society, particularly apathy and a misplaced understanding of intimacy consistent with parasocial interactions. In the *Financial Times*, Wullschlager, for example, offered the following account of Peyton's portraits:

Peyton's medium – mostly thin oil paint applied to board, which has none of the absorption of canvas – emphasizes the hard artificiality of what appear to be soft, ragdoll bodies. Equally paradoxical is her small scale, implying intimacy but delivering distance: no one meets your eye; languor, indifference, passivity replace psychological insight. Friends and lovers – sometimes painted from life, although you wouldn't know it – have identikit bland faces and offhand stances... The sense of a privilege class slumbering its way into oblivion is Peyton's unique contribution to 21<sup>st</sup>-century portraiture, though her methods are in no way formally inventive... Does Peyton critique or merely comply with the virtual realities of our image-overload, celebrity-drenched times? Perhaps it doesn't matter: though she is maddeningly self-absorbed, sickeningly ingratiating, her decadence is our decadence...<sup>340</sup>

Wullschlager's strong criticism of Peyton is supported by properties such as Peyton's subjects' poses, soft palette and light paint application that can be visually verified in her work. However, she misinterprets Peyton's purposes by analysing her art as actual portraiture rather than, as it is asserted in this thesis, an extended and symbolic form of self-portraiture. Wullschlager judges Peyton's work as failing to satisfy an implied promise of insight into her subjects or critique of fan-culture, but she does not engage with the possibility that Peyton is purposefully stopping short of hypothesising about her subjects by depicting them from her position, as a fan, whose access to celebrities' personalities is limited and filtered through the mass media. Wullschlager asks whether Peyton is critiquing celebrity culture, therefore implying that fandom is a

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2008), accessed 5 July 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2008/07/11/arts/design/11peyt.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/11/arts/design/11peyt.html?_r=0).

<sup>339</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 228.

<sup>340</sup> J. Wullschlager, 'Elizabeth Peyton'.

problematic identity to embody and that Peyton's representation of fandom exemplifies a 'decadent' and negative element in contemporary culture. Yet the literature on fandom that was discussed in the Introduction and Chapter One of this thesis empirically presents fandom, particularly the parasocial interactions that Peyton's work represents, as a neutral or positive element of contemporary individuals' lives. An inaccurate condemnation of fandom and a misunderstanding of Peyton's subject matter – which is not celebrity culture as such but her relationship with particular celebrities – therefore inform Wullschlager's criticism of Peyton. In this context, Peyton's art is not 'maddeningly self-absorbed' as long as viewers are compelled by her subjectivity and relate to her professed affinity for celebrities whose psychology remains captivating but opaque to fans.

Therefore, Peyton's work cannot be interpreted merely as a tactic to 'ingratiate' herself with celebrities or to provide a deceptive illusion of intimacy, but rather as a demonstration of the unequal distribution of power between fans and celebrities, which some fans find emotionally satisfying.<sup>341</sup> Wullschlager's interpretation of Peyton's work represents a critical scepticism toward artists' celebratory relationship with popular culture. Peyton's art-star status appears to critics like Wullschlager as a cynical exchange where her naked admiration for the mass media inspires reciprocal attention in the popular press. Underlying this criticism is a concern that Peyton's work lacks complexity beyond its allure for audiences. This thesis disputes that assumption by parsing fandom's paradoxical emotions as represented in Peyton's art and providing her art with its complicated content. While Wullschlager views Peyton's work as superficial – evidenced by her observation about Peyton's paint remaining on the surface of her board rather than penetrating a canvas – her choice of subjects and her depiction of her subjects as physically sicker than they appear in life indicate a troubled relationship to her own fandom rather than a critical commentary on celebrity culture or an uncritical acceptance of it, as was seen in Peyton's portraits of Morrissey, and will be seen in the upcoming section about Peyton's identification with celebrities.

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<sup>341</sup> C.K. Bradshaw, 'A Japanese View of Dependency: What Can Amae Psychology Contribute to Feminist Theory and Therapy?', *Women & Therapy* 9, no. 1–2 (1990), 67–86.

Beyond Wullschlager's criticism, pejorative comparisons between Peyton's art and adolescent expression indicate a distaste toward fandom, as a general subject, or specifically toward an aca-fan approach to the subject matter of celebrity, as well as possible underlying gender discord. As will be seen, Graham and Violette address their own fandom by employing aesthetics that are antithetical to Peyton's overtly subjective, intrapersonal style. Their work represents comparable approaches to artistically discussing fandom and an artist's own fandom. It illuminates how Peyton's art embodies cultural assumptions about fandom that potentially deflect attention away from the more complex elements in her imagery – her depiction of parasocial relationships and her fannish attachments to celebrities.

The themes addressed by Wullschlager and her peers are central themes in the reception and content of Peyton's work. Gender, adolescence, intention (meaning irony or sincerity) and her identification with celebrities as it exemplifies fans' celebrity identification, will be drawn out in the following sections through analysis of Peyton's paintings and public statements about her art.

### *Peyton's Art and Adolescent Expression*

Despite gender complexities in Peyton's portraits, critics regularly make analogies between her art and adolescent girls' textual productivity. Focus on Peyton's apparently naïve technique often includes characterisation of her style as regressive, yet this section will present Peyton as an artist undertaking a sophisticated manipulation of gender in her art through the gender associations of her feminine technique and her feminisation of subjects with macho public personas. This criticism reflects the equation of adult fandom with pathological immaturity that was discussed in Chapter One (pp. 68-70).<sup>342</sup>

Examples of this approach to Peyton's aesthetic include a review in *The Guardian* asserting, 'There is a naive innocence to the portraits of superstars by Elizabeth Peyton, as if they've been painted by a schoolgirl with a crush'.<sup>343</sup> Ben Lewis, a

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<sup>342</sup> See: L. Lewis, 'Something More than Love', 157.

<sup>343</sup> Exhibition: 'Live Forever: Elizabeth Peyton', *The New Museum*, New York; *Walker Art Center*, Minneapolis; *Whitechapel Art Gallery*, London; *Bonnefantenmuseum*, Maastricht, The Netherlands – 2008; J. Lack (2009-04-08), 'Artist of the Week 36: Elizabeth Peyton', *The Guardian* (April 8 2009),

British newspaper critic positioning himself in the role of patriarchal authority over Peyton, opened his positive critique of her 2009 London mid-career retrospective with a fantasy of himself as Peyton's high-school maths teacher feeling frustrated when finding her composition book full of drawings rather than serious studies, describing her work as being 'in the style of a teenage female art student, aged 15-18'.<sup>344</sup> Similarly, an American critic exclaims: 'Like a teenager, she looks to blur the line between her immediate environment and the fantasy world she has slowly woven out of magazine spreads and album covers. Hers is an exercise in memorializing the last stop on the road to growing up'.<sup>345</sup> A writer for the *New York Times* stated that '[Peyton] helped advance a movement that has had legions of young women making art that resembles the creative efforts of dreamy teenage girls'.<sup>346</sup> The use of the word 'dreamy' in the *New York Times* review evokes stereotypes of fans as passive consumers, without self-conscious engagement with objects of their fan interest.<sup>347</sup> These examples are a few representatives of a reigning motif in critical response to her art.

Despite repeated critical comparisons between Peyton's art and adolescent expression, few critics explain why they find this analogy problematic. Among the few to elaborate on this interpretation, critic Jacqueline Cooper argues that Peyton's embodiment of an adolescent aesthetic is reactionary. She describes Peyton's paintings as being:

conservative as they politely resist challenging the establishment from which they are appropriated. Instead, the work prefers to reflect on the residue of radicalism traditionally seen as embodied in adolescence, but tragically consumed and rendered impotent by the entertainment industry.<sup>348</sup>

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accessed 29 March 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/apr/08/artist-elizabeth-peyton](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/apr/08/artist-elizabeth-peyton).

<sup>344</sup> B. Lewis, 'Elizabeth Peyton Is a Pin-up Painter', *Evening Standard* (9 July 2009), accessed 28 March 2014 at [www.standard.co.uk/arts/elizabeth-peyton-is-pinup-painter-7415371.html](http://www.standard.co.uk/arts/elizabeth-peyton-is-pinup-painter-7415371.html).

<sup>345</sup> G. Moreno, 'High Noon in Desire Country: the Lingering Presence of Extended Adolescence in Contemporary Art', *Art Papers* (March–April 2000), 32.

<sup>346</sup> K. Johnson, 'Beautiful People'.

<sup>347</sup> J. Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology', 10.

<sup>348</sup> J. Cooper, 'Controlling the Uncontrollable: Heavy Emotion Invades Contemporary Painting', *New Art Examiner* 28, no. 10 (September 1999), 33.

When an adult appropriates an adolescent aesthetic, then it is an aesthetic of stasis rather than progression because it seeks to inhibit progress towards adulthood. Therefore, in Cooper's critique, Peyton's aesthetic is seen as inherently conservative because it is reactionary against adulthood. In this context, Peyton's softened depictions of actively rebellious celebrities express resignation. On the other hand, although political motives are not explicit in Peyton's art, she does focus her attention on rebellious characters. Her subjects might all be perceived as primarily self-destructive 'rebels without causes'. Thus, just as late capitalism co-opts and neutralises voices of protest through commercialisation of rebellion, Peyton's portraits can be interpreted as expressing the feebleness of her subjects' protest.<sup>349</sup>

In contrast to derogatory descriptions of Peyton's art as immature, another camp of critics recognise Peyton's art as part of a third-wave feminist movement in the 1990s which draws attention to girlhood and the politics of women's sexual and identity development.<sup>350</sup> The 1990s were an era when girlhood was gaining attention within contemporary art as a subject of socio-political and conceptual concern.<sup>351</sup> For example, the critic Nadia Tscherny describes Peyton's art as representing 'the female gaze',<sup>352</sup> commandeering an artistic gaze often associated with male artists' attention to female subjects: 'Her art seems to question the continued relevance of the monolithic concept of the gaze as a sexist assertion of superiority and control'.<sup>353</sup> Tscherny's analysis empowers Peyton's perspective in a way that, as seen in Chapter One (pp. 78), Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs argue that Beatlemania was a pre-feminist form of teenage girls' sexual assertiveness.<sup>354</sup> As

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<sup>349</sup> J. Heath and A. Potter, *The Rebel Sell: How the Counterculture Became Consumer Culture* (Chichester: Capstone, 2006).

<sup>350</sup> K. Random Love, 'The Possibility of an Island: the Adolescent Condition in Contemporary Art in New York' (Courtauld Institute Ph.D. thesis, 2010).

<sup>351</sup> C. Grant and L. Waxman, 'Introduction', in Catherine Grant (ed.) *Girls! Girls! Girls! in Contemporary Art* (London: Intellect Press, 2011), 1–13.

<sup>352</sup> N. Tscherny, 'Beautiful People', *Art in America* 97, no. 5 (May 2009), 24.

<sup>353</sup> N. Tscherny, 'Beautiful People', 24.

<sup>354</sup> B. Ehrenreich et al., 'Beatlemania', 84–106.

Tscherny explains, Peyton's work is not deliberately political, stating that, 'Peyton is perhaps the least self-analytical but most consistently self-referential... having declared her interest in portraying only people she cares about deeply'.<sup>355</sup> However, Tscherny argues that Peyton's focus on beauty and pleasure draws attention to identities and interests previous neglected by the art community, and generates conversations about issues of taste and amateur artistic expression. As Tscherny observes, critics' dismissal of Peyton's work is abetted by her refusal to contextualise her practice or critically engage with theory relevant to her work.

### *Gender Identity and Celebrity Identification*

Peyton's subjective interpretation of her subjects' gender complies with Sandvoss's interpretation of fandom as an expression of personal identity. Although static and abstract, unlike the karaoke singers in Collins's and Breitz's videos, Peyton's portraits act according to Sandvoss's description of fan performances as 'impersonation and imitation [...] aimed to eradicate the visual distinctions between fan and the object of fandom, and to function as a "sign of itself" to the fan community'.<sup>356</sup> Rather than dress like her cherished celebrity, Peyton remodels male celebrities to resemble herself.

Peyton's portrait of English singer Liam Gallagher, entitled *Blue Liam* (figure 27) exemplifies her treatment of gender in her art. This painting, from 1996, focuses only on the singer's surly face. He is surrounded in this image by a white background that is the same shade as his skin and has small sections of watery grey. This grey is densely dispersed and more prominent in patches seen under Gallagher's eyes. Peyton depicts his eyes as slightly pointed in different directions and his eyebrows as low and joined in the centre, as in life, giving his face an aggressive appearance. In contrast to this macho demeanour, Peyton uses a bright red colour for his lips and highlights the sharp curve of his cheekbones, thereby creating an allusion to femininity. As a public figure, Gallagher was known as a 'bad boy', or traditionally macho figure, in contrast to Peyton's feminising colour on his lips and her attention to

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<sup>355</sup> N. Tscherny, 'Beautiful People', 24.

<sup>356</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 96.

his bone structure, which resembles her depiction of herself (figure 26).<sup>357</sup>

In response to works like *Blue Liam*, the word ‘androgynous’ appears in reviews of Peyton’s art in art-specific and mainstream publications such as *Art in America*, *Financial Times*, *Frieze*, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.<sup>358</sup> This focus on Peyton’s treatment of gender in her work is often descriptive but rarely engages critically with Peyton’s deployment of gender signifiers in her work as a manifestation of fandom. However, feminist art historian Uta Grosenick proposes a more appropriate interpretation of Peyton’s engagement with gender in her portraits by describing them as ‘gender-surfing’ or cross-gendered, thereby highlighting the feminisation of her male figures, rather than discussing them as gender-neutral or ambiguously gendered.<sup>359</sup> Grosenick defines ‘gender-surfing’ as ‘traversing the frontiers between genders and adopting, if only for a limited time, the role(s) of the other gender’.<sup>360</sup> Therefore, Peyton depicts a fantasy of gender fluidity rather than transforming her subjects’ identities completely.

In this context, Peyton, who is bisexual and familiar with queer subculture, symbolically engages her subjects in a temporary transgender experience by creating a self-portraiture through associating herself with the male figures that she presents as blurring gender boundaries.<sup>361</sup> Although these images work with issues of gender identity, rather than sexuality or sexual identity, many of Peyton’s subjects, such as musicians Eminem and Liam Gallagher, are publically known as macho figures

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<sup>357</sup> D. Buckingham, ‘Living in a Young Country?: Youthful Creativity and Cultural Policy in the United Kingdom’, *Youth Cultures: Texts, Images and Identities*, (London: James Bennett, 2003), 94.

<sup>358</sup> N. Tscherny, ‘Elizabeth Peyton’; J. Wullschlager, ‘Elizabeth Peyton’; J. Savage, ‘Boys Keep Swinging’, *Frieze* (Issue 31, November-December 1996), accessed 24 March 2014 at [www.frieze.com/issue/article/boys\\_keep\\_swinging/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/boys_keep_swinging/); R. Smith, ‘The Personal and the Painterly’, *New York Times* (9 October 2008), accessed 27 March 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2008/10/10/arts/design/10peyt.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/10/arts/design/10peyt.html?_r=0).

<sup>359</sup> U. Grosenick and I. Becker, eds., *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Century*, eds. (New York: Taschen, 2001), 17.

<sup>360</sup> U. Grosenick and I. Becker, eds., *Women Artists*, 17.

<sup>361</sup> E. Orden, ‘Elizabeth Peyton’s (No So) Welcome Home’, *New York Magazine* (2 October 2009), accessed 13 March 2014 at [www.vulture.com/2009/02/elizabeth\\_peytons\\_not-so-welco.html](http://www.vulture.com/2009/02/elizabeth_peytons_not-so-welco.html); B. Moylan, ‘Have Bjork and Matthew Barney Split Up?’, *Gawker* (9 April 2009), accessed 14 April 2014 at [www.gawker.com/5352881/have-bjork-and-matthew-barney-split-up](http://www.gawker.com/5352881/have-bjork-and-matthew-barney-split-up).

whose sexuality and sexual activity is paramount to their public identities.<sup>362</sup> By rendering these male figures as androgynous, she problematises the gendering of their behaviour.

In contrast to her macho subjects, Peyton paints Cobain, a subject who shares her concern with the perimeters of normative gender definitions and expectations.<sup>363</sup> This companionable concern demonstrates her affinity for celebrities who made subverting gender stereotypes central to their own artistic project, as demonstrated by Cobain's cross-dressing stage performances.<sup>364</sup> Peyton's similar methods of portraying figures with fixed and traditional gender identities alongside those who play with their gendered personae reflect the totalising uniformity of her portraits. This resemblance defines her work and is regularly addressed by her critics but rarely as an indicator that she is essentially painting self-portraits by proxy.<sup>365</sup>

### **Peyton's Attitude to Fandom and Herself as a Fan**

Peyton expresses her ambivalence about fandom through alterations to her subjects' appearances and her use of colour, particularly the colouring of her subjects' skin that critics have described as 'wan'.<sup>366</sup> Critics' use of the word 'wan' evokes associations between glorified images of tuberculosis sufferers, fashionable during the nineteenth-century, particularly in the Romantic era and *fin-de-siecle*.<sup>367</sup> Like the subjects that

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<sup>362</sup> J. Keller, 'Shady Agonistes: Eminem, Abjection, and Masculine Protest', *Studies in Popular Culture*, (2003), 13–24; A. Hickey-Moody, 'Eminem's Lyrical Personae', *Culture, Society and Masculinities* 1, no. 2 (2009), 213–223; S. Campbell, 'From "Boys" to "Lads": Masculinity and Irish Rock Culture', *Popular Musicology Online* 2, (December 2013), accessed 15 April 2014 at [www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskin/en/home/microsites/arc/news\\_and\\_events.Maincontent.0097.file.tmp/masculinity\\_and\\_irish\\_rock\\_culture-s\\_campbell.pdf](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskin/en/home/microsites/arc/news_and_events.Maincontent.0097.file.tmp/masculinity_and_irish_rock_culture-s_campbell.pdf).

<sup>363</sup> J. Keller, 'Shady Agonistes: Eminem, Abjection, and Masculine Protest', *Studies in Popular Culture*, (2003), 17.

<sup>364</sup> M. Mazullo, 'The Man Whom the World Sold: Kurt Cobain, Rock's Progressive Aesthetic, and the Challenges of Authenticity', *Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2000), 734.

<sup>365</sup> L. Cummings, 'Too Cool for Art School'.

<sup>366</sup> A. Searle, 'Elizabeth Peyton', *The Guardian* (8 July 2009), accessed 15 April 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jul/08/elizabeth-peyton-review](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jul/08/elizabeth-peyton-review); J. Lui, 'Keep the Boys Swinging', *Frieze* (December 1996), accessed 24 March 2014 at [www.frieze.com/issue/article/boys\\_keep\\_swinging/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/boys_keep_swinging/); R. Smith, 'The Personal and the Painterly', *New York Times* (9 October 2008), accessed 27 March 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2008/10/10/arts/design/10peyt.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/10/arts/design/10peyt.html?_r=0).

<sup>367</sup> B. Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-De-Siècle Culture* (New York:

historian Bram Dijkstra documents in his study of *fine-de-siecle* aesthetics, Peyton's subjects have a distinctive pallor, hollowed eyes and red lips.<sup>368</sup> With a few exceptions, notably her 2008 portrait of the African-American First Lady Michelle Obama and her daughter Sasha, Peyton's subjects are Caucasian. Instead of being appropriately flesh-toned for Caucasian skin, however, most of her subjects' skin is alabaster with grey shadows distinguishing their bone structure, thereby creating an impression of illness and fragility. Her subjects' lips are often red and they have black or purple under their eyes (figure 27). These qualities convey Peyton's attitude toward fandom, as does her depiction of herself resembling her other subjects.

Peyton's 2003 self-portrait presents herself with the same facial characteristics, colouring and androgynous fashion style as the majority of her other subjects. Her 2003 *Live to Ride (E.P.)* (figure 26) is an oil-on-board self-portrait presenting herself leaning on her side against a patterned pillow and raising herself on her right arm. Like Peyton's other portraits, her use of light, feathery brushwork, enhanced angularity and colouring of her own skin using primarily white, dark grey and red exemplifies her signature depictions of subjects' physical appearances. In this painting, Peyton faces her viewers with an impassive expression. The painting is closely cropped to show only Peyton, a small section of a wood table and the pillow underneath her, yet there is an intriguing contrast between her casual, counter-cultural attire and the slightly conservative aesthetic alluded to in her environment. The pillow has a monochrome floral design and the table's wood slats are understated and classic. Both pieces of décor hint at a traditionally prim feminine design scheme whereas Peyton's clothes are androgynous and dishevelled. Her brown hair is cropped into a messy boyish cut. She wears a red tee-shirt with a U.S. Army insignia that she paints with patches of white to indicate that the fabric is faded. The angularity of her features is enhanced and she has dark patches under her eyes. The painting presents its subject as aligned with a counter-culture that privileges a rough and

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Oxford University Press, 1986), 36.

<sup>368</sup> H.D. Chalke, 'The Impact of Tuberculosis on History, Literature and Art', *Medical History* 6, no. 4 (1962), 301–318; D. Latimer, 'Erotic Susceptibility and Tuberculosis: Literary Images of a Pathology', *MLN* (1990), 1016–1031; R.F. Lemlein, 'Influence of Tuberculosis on the Work of Visual Artists: Several Prominent Examples', *Leonardo* (1981), 114–117; K. Byrne, *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

sexually ambiguous appearance, evidenced by her garments and grooming, against a dainty background. This composition, and its close, intimate perspective, represents Peyton's core conceptual concerns.

Along with Peyton's conflation of her appearance and the appearances of her subjects, technical aspects of Peyton's paintings reveal her fan identity; for example, her use of colours and her application of paint. Wullschlager finds her use of paint superficial, but as an articulation of a fan's perspective, Peyton's choice of diluted oil painting is articulate because her soft paint can be interpreted as dream-like, thereby illustrating fans' fantasies of celebrities. She uses dark colours, and the sober palette has a consistent delicacy because of its wateriness. The scale of her works is also relevant to their impact. Her use of modestly-sized boards resembles personal diaries and notebooks.<sup>369</sup> Her use of these amateur-scaled surfaces, rather than the monumentally-sized ones used by British painter Chantal Joffe for her paintings of fashion models whom she admires, illustrates that fandom, not celebrity, is Peyton's subject matter.<sup>370</sup> Whereas Joffe paints her subjects at an overpowering scale, Peyton's method of representation replicates the unprofessional format that fans use to document their parasocial fantasies.<sup>371</sup> In these ways, her method of representing celebrities highlights her subjective impressions of public figures rather than providing new information or a generalised representation of them.

Peyton's own public descriptions of her fan affinities support this interpretation of her art. For example, in 1998 she verbalised the correlation between her selection of subjects and the parasocial relationships discussed in Chapter One (p. 55).<sup>372</sup> In a

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<sup>369</sup> R. Smith, 'The Personal and the Painterly'.

<sup>370</sup> Representative examples of Joffe's art can be seen at [saatchigallery.com/artists/chantal\\_joffe.htm](http://saatchigallery.com/artists/chantal_joffe.htm), accessed 13 July 2014.

<sup>371</sup> D.C. Giles, 'Parasocial Interaction: a Review of the Literature and a Model for Future Research', *Media Psychology* 4, no. 3 (2002), 279–305.

<sup>372</sup> D. Horton and R. Wohl, 'Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance'. *Psychiatry* 19, no. 3 (1956), 218–219; E. Berscheid and E. Walster, *Interpersonal Attraction (Topics in Social Psychology 2nd ed.)* (North Carolina: Longman Higher Education, May 1978), accessed 28 March 2014 at [www.sexarchive.info/BIB/HTF/IA.htm](http://www.sexarchive.info/BIB/HTF/IA.htm); R.B. Rubin and M.P. McHugh, 'Development of Parasocial Interaction Relationships', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 31, no. 3 (1987), 279–292.

Q&A formatted interview, she responded to an interviewer inquiring whether her images pay tribute to her subjects with the reply, 'They are kind of heroes. They help me [...] when [I] have a problem [I] think: what would Napoleon have done in this case? [...] it makes me think I'm OK'.<sup>373</sup> This statement demonstrates Peyton's personal emotional investment in her subjects. She similarly identified her emotional investment and expression in 2000 as: 'In a way, you can be much more intimate with people you don't know'.<sup>374</sup> She continued to explain that her attachment to celebrities acts as an extension of her personal perceptions and experiences by detailing her affinity for singers John Lennon and Kurt Cobain as: 'It's a beautiful thing when a collapse occurs between our own personal needs and what's in the air'.<sup>375</sup> 'Collapse', in the context of Peyton's quotation, can be interpreted as alluding to the conflation of a fan's feeling with the *zeitgeist*.

Seen in the context of her art, Peyton's statement about 'collapse' evokes the physical resemblance between her and the male rock stars she paints. By representing herself and celebrities in a similar way, she demonstrates her form of intimacy with her idols. This 'collapse' is also evident in Peyton's statements about her working method when depicting subjects whom she personally knows. Peyton expressed her motives for this method as, 'I think that a lot of what painting is about, for me especially, is about missing people and wanting to keep them, in a way. So it is sort of important for me to be away from them, to have these photos, to really think about them'.<sup>376</sup> Peyton's statement evokes Roland Barthes's theories about the relationship between photography and mortality from his 1981 essay *Camera Lucida*.<sup>377</sup> Barthes writes about a photograph's ability to capture a living person, despite the inevitability of that person's death.<sup>378</sup> In keeping with Barthes's perspective, Peyton's paintings, as will

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<sup>373</sup> R. Muir, 'Art: Star Gazer', *The Independent* (21 February 1998), accessed 3 April 2014 at [www.independent.co.uk/life-style/art-star-gazer-1146106.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/art-star-gazer-1146106.html).

<sup>374</sup> R. Pruitt and S. LaFreniere, 'Elizabeth Peyton', *Index Magazine* (April 2000), accessed 28 March 2014 at [www.indexmagazine.com/interviews/elizabeth\\_peyton.shtml](http://www.indexmagazine.com/interviews/elizabeth_peyton.shtml).

<sup>375</sup> R. Pruitt and S. LaFreniere, 'Elizabeth Peyton'.

<sup>376</sup> R. Muir, 'Art: Star Gazer'.

<sup>377</sup> R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 6–13.

<sup>378</sup> R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 6–13.

be discussed further in the upcoming section of this chapter, capture vibrant moments in the lives of figures whose public personae are focused on their mortality, such as drug addict Pete Doherty (figure 30). The result of Peyton's use of photographs is a conflation of the imaginary intimacy that she implies with her images of celebrities and her authentic intimacies. For example, Peyton's 1997 portrait of her friend Craig Wadlin (figure 31) is often mistakenly identified as a portrait of Cobain.<sup>379</sup> This mistake is due to the physical resemblance of these subjects as well as an overt lack of expressive and compositional differences between Peyton's portraits of her personal and celebrity subjects.

In a 2013 interview, Peyton expressed a fascination with adolescence but did not describe herself as masquerading as an adolescent in her art, as proposed by her interviewer.<sup>380</sup> However, Peyton's self-revelations in the press are often evasive and deny that they are borne by the process of theoretical self-reflection, which supports media accusations that she is not fully mature or self-aware. Although she openly admits to critical self-reflection, in terms of her emotional attachments, as evidenced by her statement above about the role of photographs in her work, she avoids engaging with fan theory or alternative theories. Statements such as these support a perception of the culture of fandom as uncritical, emotional and regressive. In keeping with this stereotype, Peyton's quotes are primarily subjective, rather than analytical, and occasionally contradict surface information in her images. For example, during her lecture at the Art Institute of Chicago in 2006, she refused to address the similarities in her depictions of different celebrities.<sup>381</sup>

Similarly, in a 2009 interview, she responded to a question about her use of colour with the statement: 'I know nothing about that but I do, I guess'.<sup>382</sup> In this statement,

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<sup>379</sup> Google image searches of 'Elizabeth Peyton, Kurt Cobain' conjured this image of Waldin on 23 May 2014 and 6 June 2014.

<sup>380</sup> L. Shapton, 'Elizabeth Peyton', 43.

<sup>381</sup> M. Marchenkova, 'Avoiding the Obvious: Elizabeth Peyton Evades Questions about Painting Famously Pale, White Men', *FNews* (December 2006), accessed 23 April 2014 at [www.fnewsmagazine.com/2006-dec/avoiding-the-obvious.php](http://www.fnewsmagazine.com/2006-dec/avoiding-the-obvious.php).

<sup>382</sup> Elizabeth Peyton video interview (9 July 2009), *Whitechapel Gallery*, accessed 23 April 2014 at [www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/live-forever-elizabeth-peyton](http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/live-forever-elizabeth-peyton).

Peyton's use of 'do' can be interpreted as a resistance to analyse her creative process and the choices she makes in her artistic practice. She can also be interpreted as creating intuitively and having her art represent her emotional investment in rather than intellectual attitude toward fandom – which was defined in the Introduction (p. X) as emotionally motivated.

### *Art Star Status and Amae*

This emotional investment expressed in Peyton's art and statements about her artistic intentions is theoretically grounded in the concept of *amae* discussed in Chapter One (p. X). Peyton, like McGinley, embodies fandom as a form of *amae*, which is an emotionally rewarding, structured, form of willing subordination by a fan to a celebrity.<sup>383</sup> As discussed in Chapter One (p. 60), Yano identifies tensions between Western attitudes towards fans as 'passive victims of manipulation who have easily fallen prey to the seductive powers of mass media', and Japanese ideas about fans' wilful subordination to celebrities.<sup>384</sup> Peyton's art has been described as an 'act of devotion'.<sup>385</sup> In Peyton's portraits, this quality can be mistaken for cynicism, perhaps because irony was a significant discursive mode in postmodern art and popular culture during the years when Peyton's work gained attention.<sup>386</sup> Her success has also attracted questions about her motives as social leverage in a culture obsessed with celebrity. *Amae* can be interpreted negatively in a Western cultural context where independence is valued and willing subordination is viewed with concern as an indicator of an individual's personality flaw.<sup>387</sup>

In this context, the sense of 'intimacy' that critics perceive in Peyton's work is overtly fictional, since maintaining an element of *amae* in her fandom means that her working

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<sup>383</sup> C. Yano, 'Charisma's Realm', 335–349.

<sup>384</sup> C. Yano, 'Charisma's Realm', 336.

<sup>385</sup> J. Wullschlager, 'Elizabeth Peyton'.

<sup>386</sup> J. Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the New American "Smart" Film', *Screen* 43, no. 4 (2002), 349–369; W.F. Van Raaij, 'Postmodern Consumption', *Journal of Economic Psychology* 14, no. 3 (1993), 548; S. Klein, *Art and Laughter* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 27.

<sup>387</sup> F.A. Johnson, *Dependency and Japanese Socialization*, (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 155.

process precludes an interpersonal dynamic between herself and her subjects.<sup>388</sup> Instead, her work expresses a private affinity, as evidenced by the similarities between her portraits of personal friends and her representations of celebrities. Peyton's blurring of boundaries between personal and abstract relationships in her art reflects the parasocial bonds that a 2001 survey concludes are part of a majority of American participants' adult emotional lives (Chapter One, p 55).<sup>389</sup> This media persona contributes to comparisons between Peyton's work and portraits of celebrities by Warhol. Warhol, termed by Crimp as 'the great idiot savant of our time', has been subjected to conflicting interpretations of his work – either as a cynical criticism of pop culture or a sincere expression of fannish enthusiasms – largely because of his refusal to theoretically engage with his art's content and his embodiment of negative images of fans as uncritical, immature, superficial and potentially pathological.<sup>390</sup> The following section, the first of three comparative case studies, will provide a glimpse into the extensive critical debate about Warhol's motives and address how Warhol's form of alleged fandom relates to the role of fandom seen in Peyton's portraits.

## II. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

### Introduction

Examining the perceived ambiguities and contradictions in Warhol's work illuminates and contextualises Peyton's art. Therefore this section will provide an overview of core concerns about Warhol's art and draw conclusions about Warhol's influence on Peyton. Following an introduction to Warhol's work and a brief comparison between his art and art by Peyton, Graham and Violette were selected as subjects for this chapter because they, like Peyton, express fan affinities for Cobain through art. However, unlike Peyton, they represent their fans' attachments by employing emotionally minimal aesthetics and they acknowledge their intellectual attention to critical theory, as it relates to their work. Warhol, Violette and Graham project an appearance of impersonality and objectivity in their artwork though manufactured, rather than handmade, techniques, reduced aesthetic properties and a lack of

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<sup>388</sup> L. Cummings, 'Too Cool for Art School'.

<sup>389</sup> S.D. Boon and C.D. Lomore, 'Admirer: Celebrity Relationships Among Young Adults', *Human Communication Research* 27, no. 3 (2001), 439.

<sup>390</sup> D. Crimp, 'Getting the Warhol We Deserve', *Social Text* (1999), 49.

emotional register that is conveyed by flat surfaces and mechanical processes – such as snap-shots, silkscreens and metal sculptures. Graham’s and Violette’s minimalist and reticent homages to Cobain contain traces of the reverence and autobiographical attachments that Peyton’s imagery expresses overtly.

Comparing these artists enables us to explore whether it is Peyton’s fandom, or her overly subjective approach to representing her fandom (as indicated by her aesthetic choices), which critics find problematic. Has critical reception of Peyton’s portraits been coloured by the conflation of fandom with the gendered stereotypes and excessive emotion discussed by Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs?<sup>391</sup> In comparison to Warhol, Graham and Violette, this section argues that the combination of Peyton’s gender and her artistic style demonstrates stereotypes of fandom that are culturally stigmatised, thereby indicating that fandom itself is less problematic than its associations with feminine, excessive emotion. This assessment addresses the scholarly recognised elements of fandom that Peyton displays in her work through these comparisons. How she rejects and internalises prevalent cultural stereotypes about fans’ gender and class are also addressed through these contrasting case studies.

### **Warhol’s Influence on Peyton’s Portraits and Their Reception**

Art critics in the *New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, *Art in America* and similar publications have often compared Peyton’s art to Warhol’s portraits of celebrities.<sup>392</sup> In addition to these observations in the press, a 2012 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art dedicated to Warhol’s influence on subsequent generations of artists included Peyton’s portraits of Kurt Cobain.<sup>393</sup> Among her criticism of Peyton, Wullschlager accuses her of ‘unravelling Warhol’s legacy of finesse versus kitsch and satire versus fandom’.<sup>394</sup> This criticism exemplifies critics’ acknowledgement of Warhol’s evident influence on Peyton’s art. These critical comparisons are founded

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<sup>391</sup> B. Ehrenreich, E. Hess and G. Jacobs, ‘Beatlemania’, 87.

<sup>392</sup> K. Johnson, ‘Beautiful People’: ‘Elizabeth Peyton Brings Honor Back to Celebrities’, *Huffington Post* (4 March 2012), accessed 21 April 2014 at [www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/03/elizabeth-peyton-brings-honor\\_n\\_1392362.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/03/elizabeth-peyton-brings-honor_n_1392362.html); N. Tscherny, ‘Elizabeth Peyton’.

<sup>393</sup> M. Rosenthal et al, *Regarding Warhol: Sixty Artists, Fifty Years* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), p. 56.

<sup>394</sup> J. Wullschlager, ‘Elizabeth Peyton’.

on Warhol's and Peyton's shared subject matter and their similar methods of creating portraits from photographs of celebrities. Instead of adding additional narrative or aesthetic elements, Peyton's work, like Warhol's, succinctly 'capitalize[s] on the extra-verbal allure of star power, sex appeal, and the medium of cinema', thereby speaking to fellow fans rather than presenting objective perspectives on fandom.<sup>395</sup> Warhol and Peyton do not incorporate obvious conceptual elements in their work.

In addition to critics' responses to common visual elements inherent to Peyton's and Warhol's artworks, the artists' work and public personae also provoke critics' concerns about their motives. Critics do not describe Warhol's work as 'intimate', as they do Peyton's portraits. On the contrary, historian Arthur Danto accurately described Warhol's work in film, sculpture and painting as 'cool', in both the sub-cultural sense of being popular and the literal sense of being devoid of overt emotional affect.<sup>396</sup> Warhol's silkscreens, for example, consist of solid sections of unsaturated strong colour (figure 33).<sup>397</sup> This flat aesthetic along with his laconic utterances have been cited as evidence for contradictory critical interpretations of Warhol's methods and his underlying attitude towards his celebrity subjects.<sup>398</sup> He evaded critical interpretation of his work. Similarly, Peyton passively accepted cultural assessment of her work while rebuffing insight into her working process and refusing to share insights of her own.<sup>399</sup> Peyton's work also shares salient visual attributes with Warhol's uniform treatment of his subjects, who ranged from starlets to dictators.

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<sup>395</sup> K. Cresap, *Pop Trickster Fool: Warhol Performs Naïveté* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 8.

<sup>396</sup> A. Danto, 'The Philosopher as Andy Warhol', in S. Manghani, et al., eds., *Images: A Reader* (London, 2006), 254.

<sup>397</sup> J. Roberts, 'Warhol's "Factory": Painting and the Mass-Cultural Spectator', in P. Wood, ed., *Varieties of Modernism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 348.

<sup>398</sup> P. Mattick, 'The Andy Warhol of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Andy Warhol', *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 4 (1998), 965–987.

<sup>399</sup> P. Bergin, 'Andy Warhol: the Artist as Machine', *Art Journal* 26, no. 4 (1967), 359–363.

Warhol's homogenous representations depict celebrities as manufactured or artificially packaged commodities.<sup>400</sup> In his portraits, celebrities of different ages, races, genders, degrees of fame, cultural contexts and social significance appear the same, the result of his creation their images with a standardised process involving bright colours filling in thick outlines of their features, as if the condition of being a celebrity overrides individual particularities. This conflation of celebrities' qualities presents a possible answer to the question proposed by Dyer in 1979, which was introduced in Chapter One (p. 47), about stars' ordinariness and extraordinariness.<sup>401</sup> This vision of celebrity also raises questions about Warhol's emotional attachments to his subjects, who range from Chinese Communist leader Chairman Mao to pop star singer Diana Ross and Warhol's personal friend, the socialite Edie Sedgwick. When Warhol depicts these radically different figures in aesthetically identical ways, he is directing the viewers' focus to their fame and the unifying factors connecting celebrities rather than commenting on the particular celebrity's biography or cultural relevance. In Warhol's work, fame transforms individuals into a common celebrity identity.

The primary difference between Peyton and Warhol is her use of paint applied with brushstrokes, as opposed to his silkscreen technique which historian Cecile Whiting observantly describes as 'severing the connection between painted image and private artist'.<sup>402</sup> In contrast to the mechanised methods of Warhol, Peyton's brushstrokes are tactile; therefore they appear personal, as she interprets her subjects' appearance rather than directly replicating it, as Warhol did, even though they both work from publicity material. The flat and generic appearance of Warhol's silkscreens compelled critics to assume that Warhol was criticising popular culture, rather than expressing his identity as a fan fascinated by diverse subject matter.<sup>403</sup> However, historian

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<sup>400</sup> C. Whiting, 'Andy Warhol, the Public Star and the Private Self', *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1987), 58–75.

<sup>401</sup> R. Dyer, 'Stars as Images', in P. D. Marshall, ed., *The Celebrity Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 158.

<sup>402</sup> C. Whiting, 'Andy Warhol, the Public Star and the Private Self', *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1987), 58.

<sup>403</sup> B. Buchloh, 'Discussions', in G. Garrels (ed.), *The Work of Andy Warhol* (Seattle: The New Press, 1989), x–xi.

Thomas Crow argues that Warhol's portraits of celebrities whose public sufferings were known to audiences, such as Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and Jackie Kennedy, expresses 'the pathos of celebrity identification as [much as] the celebration of the star'.<sup>404</sup> Crow's accurate understanding of Warhol's relationship with these celebrities will form a basis for discussion below of other artists' depictions of comparable figures. Crow's recognition of 'pathos' in Warhol's 1962–1967 series of silkscreens of Monroe (figure 33) relates to theories from Fan Studies that identify parasocial interactions transcending celebrities' status as media constructions.<sup>405</sup> In this analysis, the coolness of Warhol's mechanically produced surfaces does not undercut their emotional similarity to Peyton's passionate portraits. Graham's and Violette's homages to Cobain offer another aesthetic contrast to Peyton. Warhol's work will be revisited in forthcoming chapters when it is relevant to analysis of other artists' depictions of celebrity subjects.

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<sup>404</sup> T.E. Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1996), 86.

<sup>405</sup> T.E. Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties*, 86.

### **Peyton's Portraits of Kurt Cobain Contrasted with Rodney Graham's *Creatures***

In 2006, Peyton stated that Cobain was the 'first figure that [she] looked up to'.<sup>406</sup> In keeping with her fan attachment to Cobain, she painted three oil portraits of the singer in 1995. One was titled *Kurt Smoking* (figure 34) and featured the singer inhaling a cigarette and looking vacantly to the periphery. The second portrait was an untitled portrait depicting Cobain again looking into the indeterminate distance while holding a guitar (figure 35). In the same year, Peyton also painted a watercolour portrait of Cobain in profile wearing a black slip and tiara, entitled *Princess Kurt*. She created this series immediately following the singer's suicide in 1994 and viewers' responses to her portraits of Cobain intuit a guiding consciousness of his vulnerability projected onto her images.<sup>407</sup> Critic Ben Davis, for example, describes these paintings as 'radiating the sense of the intimate imaginary space that exists between fans and their idols'.<sup>408</sup>

In contrast to these intimate portraits by Peyton, Cobain is among a diverse range of figures from history and twentieth-century popular culture whom Canadian conceptual artist Rodney Graham references in his work. Graham selects his subjects based on his acknowledged admiration for their creative and historical significance.<sup>409</sup> Accordingly, Graham selects subjects who have achieved celebrity status, according to Rojek's measure.<sup>410</sup> Graham's art celebrates such famous figures as nineteenth- and twentieth-century psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, nineteenth-century poet Stéphane Mallarmé, nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner, twentieth-century author Ian Fleming and counter-culture revolutionary prankster, Abbie Hoffman, from the 1960s. As with other artists in this thesis, this grouping reflects Graham's interests as elements of his personality through his fandom rather than external factors linking these historical figures. *New York Times* critic Ken Johnson confirms the assessment that Graham's diverse intellectual interests and emotional investments are

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<sup>406</sup> M. Marchenkova, 'Avoiding the Obvious'.

<sup>407</sup> M. Rosenthal et al, *Regarding Warhol*, 56.

<sup>408</sup> B. Davis, 'Kurt Lives', *Artnet.com* (19 August 2010), accessed 23 April 2014 at [www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/davis/kurt-cobain8-19-10.asp](http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/davis/kurt-cobain8-19-10.asp).

<sup>409</sup> M. Shields, 'Rodney Graham', *Flash Art* 288 (January–February 2013), 114.

<sup>410</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 18.

the core of his conceptual practice.<sup>411</sup> Investigating the personal nature and symbolic potential of his fascination with other peoples' creative accomplishments is Graham's primary artistic conceptual concern.<sup>412</sup>

For *Creatures*, which Graham debuted in Cologne in 1998, he wrote a song inspired by Kurt Cobain. It consisted of cacophonous, synthesised guitar sounds which viewers heard on headphones while sitting at wooden desks in an installation constructed to replicate a typical high school classroom.<sup>413</sup> In Cologne, Graham presented *Creatures* alongside his low-tech slide-tape piece *Aberdeen* (2000) (figure 36). Consisting of a slide show on a roll-out screen and a tray of slides, *Aberdeen* presents a series of documentarian-style photographs of the homes and landscape in Aberdeen, the small working-class town in Washington State where Cobain grew up. For these images, Graham adopted the attitude of a fan making a pilgrimage to a site that is intimate to a celebrity. The images are empty of obvious critical commentary and aesthetic concerns. In an interview with rock star Kim Gordon, Graham describes the raw 'low-fi' aesthetic of his photographs and his musical homage as inspired by Cobain's sound.<sup>414</sup>

Graham's compositions in his snapshot photographs of Aberdeen intentionally used simple and straightforward aesthetics similar to Collins's stationary video camera. Graham reported that he photographed the series in two hours.<sup>415</sup> He consciously recreated the aesthetic objectivity of journalistic imagery through his straightforward camera work and fans' amateur souvenir shots from pilgrimages to sites specific to

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<sup>411</sup> K. Johnson, 'A Mercurial Conceptualist Who Remains an Enigma', *New York Times* (4 November 2005), accessed 28 March 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2005/11/04/arts/design/04john.html?pagewanted=print&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/04/arts/design/04john.html?pagewanted=print&_r=0); A. Searle, 'Weird and Wonderful', *The Guardian* (24 September 2002), accessed 28 March 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2002/sep/24/art.artsfeatures](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2002/sep/24/art.artsfeatures).

<sup>412</sup> C.M. Lerm Hayes, 'Rodney Graham: Literature and What an Artist Does with It', in R. Graham, ed., *Through the Forest* (Barcelona: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 64–85.

<sup>413</sup> Rodney Graham's official CV, accessed 24 March 2014 at [www.lissongallery.com/artists/rodney-graham/cv](http://www.lissongallery.com/artists/rodney-graham/cv).

<sup>414</sup> K. Gordon, 'Rodney Graham by Kim Gordon', *Bomb Magazine* 89 (Fall 2004), accessed 28 March 2014 at [www.bombmagazine.org/article/2670/rodney-graham](http://www.bombmagazine.org/article/2670/rodney-graham).

<sup>415</sup> K. Gordon, 'Rodney Graham by Kim Gordon'.

objects of their fannish interest.<sup>416</sup> However, Graham's aesthetic objective in *Creatures* is less overt. A critic for the *Frieze* art magazine reported that *Creatures* 'attempted to say something about urban hopelessness [and] his song has nothing of the rawness that made Cobain's songs such a sign of the mood of their times'.<sup>417</sup> Another critic perceived this apparent lack as a positive contribution to Graham's project. Commenting in the *New York Times*, critic Ken Johnson writes:

*Aberdeen* is about Mr. Graham's own divided self. He grew up dreaming of becoming a rock hero and in his 20s he organized a moderately successful art-rock band. Going to the home of a self-destructive rock genius is Mr. Graham's consciously misguided search for a part of himself that he outgrew. Like most people, Mr. Graham lacked the raw charisma, instinctive talent and reckless abandon to become a rock idol. He made up for that lack with wit and craftsmanship.<sup>418</sup>

In this context, Johnson acknowledges Graham's art as a mature statement about his identity as an artist. This is in contrast to the critical dismissal of Peyton's engagement with her fan admiration as regressive, as seen in the Lewis's review of Peyton. Graham's naïve or limited musical ability indicates, for Johnson, a mature conceptual engagement with his past and his identity as an adult, yet Peyton's style, whether intentionally naïve or sincerely produced, was given less conceptual credence.

This disparity might be indicative of discrepancies between cultural judgements about male and female fan attachments, or critics may be responding primarily to aesthetic divisions. These distinctions will be further explored in the next section and throughout the case study comparisons in this thesis. As was discussed in the Introduction, fandom is defined by an emotional investment in mass media whereas artists whose fan expression appears emotionless or relatively objective is privileged

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<sup>416</sup> The aesthetics of fan photography, taken during pilgrimages to celebrity sites, have been discussed in W. Brooker, 'Everywhere and Nowhere Vancouver, Fan Pilgrimage and the Urban Imaginary', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 4 (2007), 423–444; P.J. Margry, 'The Pilgrimage to Jim Morrison's Grave at Pere Lachaise Cemetery: The Social Construction of Sacred Space', in P.J. Margry, ed., *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Iterations in the Sacred* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 143.

<sup>417</sup> M. Pesch, 'Rodney Graham', *Frieze* 49 (November–December 1999), accessed 28 March 2014 at [www.frieze.com/issue/review/rodney\\_graham/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/rodney_graham/).

<sup>418</sup> K. Johnson, 'A Mercurial Conceptualist'.

as artistically serious rather than fannish. This distinction is evident in the following comparison between Peyton's overtly emotional imagery and reticent art by Banks Violette.

### **Peyton's Portraits of Kurt Cobain Contrasted with Bank Violette's *Kill All Rock Stars***

American multi-media artist Banks Violette's series of sculptures, drawings and silkscreens of Cobain portray an aesthetic distinct from Graham's aesthetic. Yet Violette, like Graham, exhibits little clear evidence of fan affinity in his artworks, although he also professes in interviews to be a fan of Cobain.<sup>419</sup> Violette explains his rationale for a reticent aesthetic in terms that relate to scholarly concerns about fandom exemplified by Grant's observation that 'to be a fan of something indicates an over-attachment, an excessive engagement that goes beyond the intellectual'.<sup>420</sup>

Born in 1973 in rural, working-class, upstate New York, Violette followed an undergraduate degree in New York with a Master of Fine Arts from Columbia University in 2000.<sup>421</sup> His work has been categorised as part of a 'modern gothic' movement in the early years of twenty-first century alongside artists such as Sue de Beer, Terence Koh and David Altmejd, who similarly combine critical theory, a monochrome or reduced colour palette and an interest in morbid popular culture.<sup>422</sup> True crime murders, drug addiction and Cobain's suicide are Violette's central subjects. Violette's 2002 multi-media meditation on Cobain's personal influence on him and the social influence on his generation consists of monochrome abstractions. Materiality in Violette's work functions as a negation of his controversial, disordered and macabre subject matter. In 2005, for example, Violette collaborated with a convicted murderer on a sound-art installation documenting his collaborator's

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<sup>419</sup> Personal interview with a representative at Palais de Toyko gallery (12 May 2014) to confirm statement made in press release, accessed 12 May 2014 at [www.palaisdetokyo.com/en/ressources/biographies/rodney-graham](http://www.palaisdetokyo.com/en/ressources/biographies/rodney-graham).

<sup>420</sup> C. Grant, 'Fans of Feminism', *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 2 (2011), 265.

<sup>421</sup> Banks Violette's CV, accessed 3 April 2014 at [www.teamgal.com/artists/banks\\_violette](http://www.teamgal.com/artists/banks_violette).

<sup>422</sup> J. Saltz, 'Modern Gothic', *Village Voice* (27 January 2004), accessed 8 June 2014 at [www.villagevoice.com/2004-01-27/art/modern-gothic/full/](http://www.villagevoice.com/2004-01-27/art/modern-gothic/full/).

crimes.<sup>423</sup> His principle materials are graphite, salt and a black epoxy that he established as a signature. Using these materials, he indirectly references Cobain by alluding to his song lyrics and stage performance in symbolic sculptures. In supporting text material, including Violette's statements made in interviews, he discusses Cobain's identity and Cobain's significance to him, rather than creating portraits of Cobain, as Peyton does.

Whereas Peyton's romantic aesthetic and hand-crafted, tactile technique explicitly proclaim her emotional investment in her subjects, as the principal content of her work, Violette's art foregrounds a misleading appearance of detachment. The socio-economic and rural context of Violette's upbringing resembled Cobain's childhood in Aberdeen, which establishes an autobiographical line similar to McGinley's ethnic and socio-economic connection to Morrissey's biography.<sup>424</sup> Beyond origins, Violette asserts a creative affinity with Cobain functioning as a shared sensibility.<sup>425</sup> On the surface, however, Violette's art shares few similarities with the rough sound of Cobain's music, which Graham evoked in *Creatures* and the sparse appearance of his photographs in Aberdeen.

*Kill all Rock Stars (Kurt Cobain)* (2002), Violette's tribute to Cobain, consisted of an installation involving five graphite drawings of running horses, spotlights and Cobain passed out on stage. These drawings were composed as inverted photo prints, with the black and white sections reversed, which resemble film negatives. They appear abstract at a distance but become legible when close. The images of Cobain do not show his face, but his posture and clothes are recognisable to anyone aware of Cobain. Accompanying these drawings, when presented at the 2004 Whitney Biennial exhibition, was a sculpture entitled *Dead Star Memorial Structure*, consisting of an epoxy drum set that appeared to melt and spill over a scaffold. These images joined symbolic references to Cobain with otherwise unrelated figures in popular culture and contemporary art, including singer Neil Young (b. Toronto, 1945–) and artist Jack

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<sup>423</sup> R. Kennedy, 'Master of Dark Arts', *New York Times* (15 May 2005), accessed 3 April 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2005/05/15/arts/design/15kenn.html?sq=Banks](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/15/arts/design/15kenn.html?sq=Banks) Violette Randy Kennedy.

<sup>424</sup> R. Kennedy, 'Master of Dark Arts'.

<sup>425</sup> Personal interview with Banks Violette (27 December 2006).

Goldstein (Montreal, 1945–2003), for both of whom Violette also professes admiration.<sup>426</sup>

Violette described his work in an interview without presenting himself as a fan of Cobain, stating that '[t]he installation is assembled from images that are fundamentally dead or bankrupt, overused or over-determined, to the point that they don't function anymore'.<sup>427</sup> However, Violette implies an admiration for Cobain by alluding to him with the statement, '[the symbols in the installation are] hyperbolic notions but every now and then someone potently reactivates them'.<sup>428</sup> Cobain, Violette implies, transformed clichés into fresh, enlivened expression.

In this instance, Violette reveals himself to be working from an aca-fan position. Rather than create work that expresses an explicitly emotional investment in pop cultural source material, Violette intentionally tempers the emotionality of a reference that gained cultural credence for its rawness and addresses it from a detached position. Responding to Violette's distanced position, critic Ben Davis proposes that Violette's detachment is too convincing when he writes: 'Pressed into too-close contact with the ghost of Kurt, made to actually say something about him, *Dead Star Memorial Structure* feels stilted, over-intellectual'.<sup>429</sup> In opposition to Davis's assessment, an alternative reading of this work is that Violette's pseudo-academic attitude and lack of a didactic thesis inspires viewers who are uncomfortable with Cobain's music to critically appreciate his status as a cultural icon.

Violette's emotionally reserved aesthetic responds to underlining prejudices against fans which Peyton's work attracts, as seen in the different critical responses to their work. Peyton's art is interpreted as regressive and immature, whereas Violette's art is criticised by Davis for its reserve. This distinction relates cultural attitudes towards

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<sup>426</sup> C. Bollen, 'Banks Violette', *Interview Magazine* (September 2004), accessed 6 March 2014 at [www.interviewmagazine.com/art/banks-violette/](http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/banks-violette/).

<sup>427</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'In the Flesh', *Artnet.com* (8 March 2004), accessed 3 March 2014 at [www.artnet.com/Magazine/features/honigman/honigman3-8-04.asp](http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/features/honigman/honigman3-8-04.asp).

<sup>428</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'In the Flesh'.

<sup>429</sup> B. Davis, 'Kurt Lives'.

fandom and pop culture in which Violette explicitly engages. Supporting this interpretation, Violette says:

Mass-media culture in America has always been a battleground for the representation of class antagonisms. I'm interested in directly embracing the theatre implied by these things, in bracketing those antagonisms instead of going one route and making it hyperbolic.<sup>430</sup>

In this quotation, Violette acknowledges addressing the class prejudices that Jensen identifies when she writes about implicit distinctions between scholars and fans, or aficionados and fans (p. 65).<sup>431</sup> Through the juxtaposition of his restrained aesthetic and his work's excessive content, Violette visually replicates the act of masking emotional investment in objective presentation which Jensen describes as inherent to traditional academic writing.<sup>432</sup>

The vulnerability evident in Peyton's images, which depict Cobain as physically frail and looking disoriented with his unfixed, glassy gaze, is absent in Violette's imagery. Instead, Violette apparently undermines the affinity for him that he expressed in interviews. The high gloss of Violette's art, achieved with epoxy and metal, is visually opposed to the 'slacker' aesthetic associated with Cobain's artistic and dress decisions which favoured a worn, decaying and abject appearance.<sup>433</sup> Violette's combination of the disparate aesthetics of minimalism and violent pop cultural culture is consistent with Nirvana's postmodern blending of subcultural styles, such as punk music and folk music, and Cobain's core concern, as recognised by Mazullo, is shared by Violette who similarly explores notions of cultural authenticity through his use of symbols, such as broken drum kits and evidence of self-destructive stage performances, which he considers bankrupt of meaning

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<sup>430</sup> J. Tumlrir, 'Banks Violette', *Artforum* (October 2004), 86.

<sup>431</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 19.

<sup>432</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 21–23.

<sup>433</sup> M. Delvaux, 'The Exit of a Generation: the "Whatever" Philosophy', *Midwestern Quarterly – A Journal of Contemporary Thought* 40, no. 2 (1999), 171–186.

However, it can be argued that Peyton's romanticisation of the physical fragility and unhealthy appearance of celebrities such as Cobain, Eminem and Doherty equally glorifies celebrities' self-harming behaviour by presenting their appearance as soft, romantic and tender.<sup>434</sup> Thus Peyton's pictorial style gains context when the shared specifics in the biographies of her subjects are incorporated in an analysis of her art. The consumptive colouring of her subjects, earlier compared to the fashion for glorifying a tubercular appearance in the Romantic era, relates to her interest in self-destructive celebrities. This analogy connects Peyton's signature style with fans' fascination with celebrities whose physicality demonstrates signs of mortality and morbidity. These qualities are exemplified by Peyton's portrait of the singer Pete Doherty (figure 30). Doherty, who is also the subject of a portrait by Stella Vine in Chapter V, embodies a romantic persona characterised by the dichotomy in Peyton's art between morbidity and idealised, feminised masculine beauty.<sup>435</sup> Doherty's drug addiction and self-harm have been extensively documented in the British and international media.<sup>436</sup> In her watercolour painting, Peyton portrays him with his mouth open and his eyes turned upwards in a pose that evokes religious images of martyrdom such as Andrea Mantegna's 1480 painting of the persecution of St. Sebastian. She only paints his face and enhances his youth and soft features in her portrait, although news images of Doherty that were common concurrent with her creation of this image clearly showed the effects of drug abuse on his face. Rather than depict these signs of sickness, Peyton relies on viewers' knowledge of Doherty to contribute content to her work and draw conclusions about her fan status based on her idealised image of the troubled celebrity. These macabre elements are overtly the content of Violette's art, whereas they can be and have been intruded in Warhol's and Graham's work, but are overlooked in Peyton's art. Her gender or the apparent fan nature of her work, which adheres to stereotypes of female fans, distracts viewers from the macabre undercurrents of her art.

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<sup>434</sup> D.A. Jobes, A.L. Berman, P.W. O'Carroll, S. Eastgard and S. Knickmeyer, 'The Kurt Cobain Suicide Crisis: Perspectives from Research, Public Health, and the News Media', *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 26, no. 3 (1996), 260–271.

<sup>435</sup> S. Hawkins, *The British Pop Dandy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 37.

<sup>436</sup> P. Berkers and M. Eeckelaer, 'Rock and Roll or Rock and Fall? Gendered Framing of the Rock and Roll Lifestyles of Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty in British Broadsheets', *Journal of Gender Studies* 23, no. 1 (2014), 3–17.

For Graham and Violette, their engagement with self-destructive celebrities, such as Cobain, is motivated by fandom and their fandom is part of the content of their work; their aesthetic choices, though, establish distance between themselves and their subject matter. Warhol's motives remain disputed by historians who debate the sincerity of his fandom. Art theorist David McNeill, however, argues that sincerity is a concept drained of meaning in postmodern culture, therefore '[w]hile a romantic or expressionist artist's sincerity might once have been of paramount importance, to ponder whether Andy Warhol was sincere when he painted... would be to miss the point'.<sup>437</sup> McNeill's statement provides a plausible explanation for Warhol's cryptic position regarding his fan feelings for his celebrity subjects. If the concept of sincerity is meaningless in the context surrounding his work, then Warhol's art is freed from an obligation to assert a clear position, beyond the obvious interest needs to select certain subjects for artworks instead of other ones.

Sincerity, however, becomes a most pressingly problematic concern when considering the subgenre of Warhol's work that engages celebrity subjects whose public personae is influenced by audiences' potential culpability for their personal suffering. The most extreme twentieth-century example of such a figure is Princess Diana, whose death is believed to have been partially caused by paparazzi and who is the subject of portraits by Stella Vine and Karen Kilimnik, which shall be discussed in detail in future chapters.<sup>438</sup> With Warhol, Violette and Graham, the celebrities' destruction appears to be produced by an audience system or culture outside of the artist. By creating work about certain celebrities and not others, these artists acknowledge that their selection of subjects implicates them in a cultural fascination with suffering celebrities. However, their aesthetic choices distance them from direct involvement in the process of consuming celebrities' personal pain because they remove evidence of strong emotion from their work.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> D. McNeill, 'Putting Sincerity to Work: Acquiescence and Refusal in Post-Fordist Art', in Earnst van Alphen et al. (eds.), *The Rhetoric of Sincerity* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2009), 157.

<sup>438</sup> K.M. Douglas and R.M. Sutton, 'The Hidden Impact of Conspiracy Theories: Perceived and Actual Influence of Theories Surrounding the Death of Princess Diana', *The Journal of Social Psychology* 148, no. 2 (2008), 210–222.

<sup>439</sup> C. Lumby, 'Vanishing Point', *Planet Diana: Cultural Studies and Global Mourning* (Sydney:

In contrast to works by these other artists, Peyton's romanticisation of the physical fragility and unhealthy appearance of celebrities such as Cobain, Eminem and Doherty glorifies celebrities' self-harming behaviour by presenting their appearance as soft, romantic and tender.<sup>440</sup> Peyton's pictorial style gains context when the shared specifics in the biographies of her subjects are incorporated in an analysis of her art. The consumptive colouring of her subjects, earlier compared to the fashion for glorifying a tubercular appearance in the Romantic era, relates to her interest in self-destructive celebrities. When writing about self-destructive celebrities in popular culture, Holmes and Redmond assert that '[t]here is no doubt that the sadness that made Romantics "interesting" also renders contemporary celebrities marketable'.<sup>441</sup> This analogy connects Peyton's signature style with fans' fascination with celebrities whose physicality demonstrates signs of unhealthy life-styles.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that Peyton's identification with celebrities is the primary narrative in her art. Evidence from her imagery is presented in this chapter to demonstrate that her work represents a sophisticated fan identity, contrary to critics' accusations of immaturity and superficiality in her work. In particular, it has been shown that Peyton's art expresses macabre themes and emotional ambiguities that have not been sufficiently acknowledged by the contemporary critical art community. Writers such as art critic Laura Hoptman describe Peyton's portraits as representing 'the adoring eye of an unrequited lover',<sup>442</sup> yet her selection of subjects, especially in her most well-known works from the 1990s, imply that her relationship with celebrities also embodies an underlying morbidity similar to Warhol's works

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University of West Sydney Press, 1997); R. Johnson, 'Exemplary Differences: Mourning (and Not Mourning) a Princess', in A. Kear and D.L. Steinberg, eds., *Mourning Diana: Nation, Culture and the Performance of Grief* (London: Routledge, 2002), 15–40.

<sup>440</sup> D.A. Jobes, A.L. Berman, P.W. O'Carroll, S. Eastgard and S. Knickmeyer, 'The Kurt Cobain Suicide Crisis: Perspectives from Research, Public Health, and the News Media', *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 26, no. 3 (1996), 260–271.

<sup>441</sup> S. Holmes and S. Redmond, 'Fame Damage', in S. Holmes and S. Redmond, eds., *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 316.

<sup>442</sup> I. Blazwick, J. Giorno and L.J. Hoptman, 'Live Forever: Elizabeth Peyton' (New York: Phaidon Press, 2011), 12.

depicting Monroe, Taylor and Kennedy, as well as Violette's overt interest in macabre popular culture. Like Warhol, whose depictions of Monroe (figures 32 and 33) are among his most widely recognised artworks, Peyton's portraits of young, male rock stars are a strong element in her work, despite her broader range of portrait subjects.<sup>443</sup>

From this point of view, Peyton expresses a complex image of fandom that is neither cynical nor uncritically adoring. The remaining three artists discussed in this thesis share these concerns with Peyton. Despite the superficial signifiers of adoration in her work, she shares with Kilimnik, Mellor and Vine a willingness to explore the complex implications of her fandom in her portraits of celebrities, as will be seen in upcoming chapters.

## CHAPTER IV

### *A Stalker Sensibility: Karen Kilimnik's Fantasies about Celebrities*

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<sup>443</sup> A 2004 newspaper poll, for example, named *Marilyn Diptych* as the third most influential piece of modern art in a survey of 500 art-literate readers – S. Holmes and S. Redmond, 'Fame Damage', in S. Holmes and S. Redmond, eds., *Framing Celebrity*, 316.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Karen Kilimnik (b. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1955–) creates drawings, paintings, video collages and installations depicting fashion models, historical figures and Hollywood actors. Her selection of subjects is based on her subjective fan interest in these celebrities. As with Peyton’s work, responses by critics to Kilimnik’s art can be divided into two categories: those who interpret her art as unconditionally adoring and those who perceive her as motivated by pathological forms of fandom. Critic David Rimanelli captures both assessments with his description of her art as expressing

‘love and longing, with maybe a frisson of the stalker sensibility’.<sup>444</sup> In accordance with Rimanelli’s characterisation, this thesis argues that her work is not pathological but that both critical camps of her viewers are accurate because her art expresses the paradox at the heart of fandom: the co-existence of adoration with aggressive fan impulses.

As was argued in Chapter One, these tensions are inherent to fandom in general but they have particular relevance to this chapter because, despite their reflection of normative fandom, the psychologically problematic elements in Kilimnik’s art have received excessive attention because her art and her public identity embody the disparaging stereotypes that are popularly ascribed to fans. Critical responses to Kilimnik’s biography, as well as her own public self-presentation, demonstrate how adherence to cultural conceptions of fans causes artists’ work to be regarded differently than work by artists whose fan affinities adhere less to cultural stereotypes. In this section Kilimnik’s art will be investigated to show how fandom is represented in her art and whether it is really a distinctive example of what a 1992 newspaper reporter described as an ‘almost pathological’ interest in celebrity, or whether it is rather the case that her critics find fandom itself disturbing.<sup>445</sup>

Following a brief biography of Kilimnik, this chapter presents a critical analysis of her artistic style and themes through representative examples of her early and mid-period artwork. The artworks that receive detailed attention in this chapter are her paintings *Me as Elizabeth Taylor in National Velvet Before Horse Race* (1988) (figure 38), *Me – I Forgot the Wire Cutters – Getting the Wire Cutters from the Car to Break into Stonehenge, 1982* (1998) (figure 46) and her 2006 video collage *Kate Moss at the Beginning*. It will focus its more general discussion on Kilimnik’s drawings and paintings produced between 1998 and 2010. However, it includes a section devoted to a video collage that demonstrates Kilimnik’s primary conceptual concerns, despite her limited work with video. The overall focus on drawing and painting reflects the significance of these mediums in Kilimnik’s commercial success and media identity.

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<sup>444</sup> D. Rimanelli, ‘Too Much Isn’t Enough’, *Artform* (September 2011), accessed 14 September 2014 at [www.deitch.com/artists/press\\_text.php?pressId=14](http://www.deitch.com/artists/press_text.php?pressId=14).

<sup>445</sup> M. de la Vina, ‘Scatter Brain Kilimnik Connects in N.Y.C: a Moore College Reject Finds Favor and Friends’, *Philadelphia Daily News* (24 March 1992), accessed 15 September 2014 at [articles.philly.com/1992-03-24/news/26018408\\_1\\_installation-word-and-image-karen-kilimnik](http://articles.philly.com/1992-03-24/news/26018408_1_installation-word-and-image-karen-kilimnik).

Her more recent work is not included because her later installations have a distinctly different aesthetic and feature fewer celebrity subjects.

After the overview of Kilimnik's art and critics' responses to her artwork, the chapter will go on to compare Kilimnik's imaged portraits of fashion model Kate Moss (b. London, 1974–) with portraits of Moss by Amie Dicke (Rotterdam, 1978–), Lucien Freud (London, 1922–2011) and Marc Quinn (London, 1964–). These comparative case studies demonstrate how fandom influences Kilimnik's art and the critical reception of her art. Dicke, Freud and Quinn were selected because their artworks challenge Moss's public image yet they were conceived as expressions of admiration for the model. Freud's painting of Moss is presented as a counterpoint to fans' artwork because his attachment to her is personal. Dicke and Quinn were selected for discussion because a stronger case can be made for evidence of aggression and obsession in their art than Kilimnik's work, yet formalist choices change the critical response they receive. Together, these three artists contain the contradictions and tensions evident in Kilimnik's artwork, but their emotional investments in Moss differ significantly and their aesthetic choices obscure their fan identities. The distinctions between their work deflect critics from interpreting signs of problematic fandom within it.

## **I. KAREN KILIMNIK: CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS**

### **Kilimnik's Biographical Background**

Karen Kilimnik was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1955. At the time of this writing, she is still living in Philadelphia. In spite of her commercial and critical success since the 1990s, newspaper critic Richard Dorment described her in a 2007 profile as 'one step away from being an outsider artist' because of her geographical alienation from the North American art world centre and her lack of formal art training.<sup>446</sup> Similarly, a 1992 profile of Kilimnik publicised her rejection from the regional art schools when she applied as an aspiring undergraduate, running with the headline: 'A Moore College Reject Finds Friends and Favor (sic)'.<sup>447</sup> She also

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<sup>446</sup> R. Dorment, 'Heritage for Barbie Girls', *The Telegraph* (27 March 2007), accessed 19 May 2014 at [www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3664066/Heritage-for-Barbie-girls.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3664066/Heritage-for-Barbie-girls.html).

<sup>447</sup> M. de la Vina, 'Scatter Brain'.

enrolled but failed to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree from Philadelphia's Temple University where she briefly studied architecture.<sup>448</sup> In his evaluation of Kilimnik, Dorment also acknowledged her refusal to participate in press coverage of her work.<sup>449</sup> As will be seen in the forthcoming section, press profiles of Kilimnik have cultivated an image of the artist as a 'mad recluse', based on her biography, as well as critical interpretation of her artwork.<sup>450</sup>

The significance of Dorment's description of Kilimnik's status as an 'outsider' within the contemporary art community is evident when comparing it to her commercial success. According to a 2009 report in an online art publication, Kilimnik's paintings sold for \$80,000 to \$500,000.<sup>451</sup> In 2007, concurrent with Dorment's writing, Kilimnik's painting *The Friendly Swarm of Butterflies Outside the Tent* (2007) sold for \$57,000 at New York's Armory Fair.<sup>452</sup> According to the Artnet.com's listing of artists' auction histories, as of 4 September 2014, her auction record was a €384,802 (\$487,969) sale with Christie's auction house in 2011. That sale was for her 1998 oil-on-canvas painting *Prince Albrecht at Home at the Castle on School Break*<sup>453</sup> This work represents her mature art and exemplifies the aesthetic and themes that defined her work from the turn of the century onwards. While commercial success does not automatically correspond with social acceptance, the value ascribed to Kilimnik's work and the attention that she has received by specialised art publications and mainstream press indicates that she is not isolated from the art world, although she does not directly participate in social activities within the art world and her biography deviates from art world conventions. Dorment's

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<sup>448</sup> J. Klein, 'An Artist Ready for Fame: Artist Karen Kilimnik Will Talk about Her Work at 6 Tonight at the ICA', *Philadelphia Inquirer* (12 February 1992), accessed 19 May 2014 at [www.articles.philly.com/1992-02-12/news/26041442\\_1\\_ica-gallery-floors-bad-taste](http://www.articles.philly.com/1992-02-12/news/26041442_1_ica-gallery-floors-bad-taste).

<sup>449</sup> This statement was written on 1 September 2014.

<sup>450</sup> L. Camhi, 'The 2008 Whitney Biennial and the Failure of an Empire', *Village Voice* (11 March 2008), accessed 3 September 2014 at [www.villagevoice.com/2008-03-11/art/farewell-dear-empire/full/](http://www.villagevoice.com/2008-03-11/art/farewell-dear-empire/full/).

<sup>451</sup> J.H. Dobrzynski, 'Karen Kilimnik Goes to the New Museum's Aid', *ArtsJournal.com* (30 April 2009), accessed 11 September 2014 at [www.artsjournal.com/realcleararts/2009/04/kilimnik-new\\_museum.html](http://www.artsjournal.com/realcleararts/2009/04/kilimnik-new_museum.html).

<sup>452</sup> Price provided by Emilie Trice, former employee of Gagosian Gallery (New York, 2002–05) on 2 October 2014.

<sup>453</sup> Search of *Artnet.com* members' archives conducted at 9 pm on 9 September 2014.

assessment of her is based instead on the correspondence of her public persona and on her art with stereotypes about fans' social marginalisation and antisocial identities.

Kilimnik's reticence with the press implies her dedication to maintaining her fan status, perhaps as a pronounced form of *amae*, beyond McGinley's reluctance to interact directly with Morrissey and Peyton's preference for painting from photographs instead of from life. Although McGinley and Peyton reject some of the privileges of access associated with their art-star status, they contribute to mainstream press coverage of their art and engage in the art world's social networks. In contrast, Kilimnik rarely poses for photographs or appears at art events.<sup>454</sup> A rare instance when she participated in a photographic portrait demonstrates her potential celebrity status. The 2012 photo shoot was staged for *Elle*, a mainstream American fashion magazine, and presented her alongside super model Stephanie Seymour, a recognised collector of her work but not a subject of her art.<sup>455</sup> This photo shoot of the model and artist together in a fabricated garden, which Kilimnik designed as an installation, was an anomaly to Kilimnik's engagement with the media. Outside of this image, Kilimnik's primary relationship with the media has been as a consumer and appropriator of pop culture.

### **Kilimnik's Signature Artistic Style and Artworks**

Kilimnik's early work was aesthetically different from the art that defined her public identity from the 1990s onwards; however, her core sensibility and themes have remained consistent. This section will describe her art and identify the mechanisms of fandom in her work starting with her earliest representations of her fan identity.

In 1988, Kilimnik doctored a photograph of a young woman – who might or might not be herself – flipping her hair. She drew abstract markings on the left side of the sepia print and darkened the woman's hair with thick black marker. She also

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<sup>454</sup> L. Mulleavey and K. Mulleavey, 'Karen Kilimnik', *Interview Magazine* (September 2010), accessed 18 May 2014 at [www.interviewmagazine.com/art/karen-kilimnik/](http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/karen-kilimnik/); L. Camhi, 'The 2008 Whitney Biennial and the Failure of an Empire,' *Village Voice* (11 March 2008), accessed 19 May 2014 at [www.villagevoice.com/2008-03-11/art/farewell-dear-empire/full/](http://www.villagevoice.com/2008-03-11/art/farewell-dear-empire/full/); R. Smith, 'Karen Kilimnik: Finding Meaning in Scatteredness', *New York Times* (1 June 2007), accessed 18 May 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/arts/design/30kili.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/arts/design/30kili.html?_r=1&).

<sup>455</sup> 'Scatter Art', *Art + Culture Blog* (3 September 2013), accessed 2 October 2014 at [www.artandculture.com/categories/681-scatter-art](http://www.artandculture.com/categories/681-scatter-art).

thickened the rim and drew exaggerated eyelashes around the woman's eyes. She titled this work *Me as Elizabeth Taylor in National Velvet Before Horse Race* (figure 38). Although Kilimnik referenced Taylor, the woman's hair, make-up and pose are unrelated to any recognisable source image of the anachronistic Hollywood star. The film named in this title is also unrelated to the image. The elements of narrative disconnection and the subject's ambiguous identity are central components of Kilimnik's drawings and paintings from the decade after *Me as Elizabeth Taylor in National Velvet Before Horse Race*.

Kilimnik's early installations also serve as precursors for her later work. At the beginning of her art-making career in the 1990s, Kilimnik generated chaotic installations involving references to mainstream pop culture and subcultural movements such as punk rock. These works were part of a 'scatter art' sub-genre of installation art. 'Scatter art' is a term that describes installations that appear disordered and randomly assembled from consumer debris and art materials. Early experimenters, pre-dating Kilimnik's contribution to the genre, include Eva Hesse, Robert Morris and Richard Serra.<sup>456</sup> Smith described this trend as 'seemingly random accumulations of cheap objects and materials that functioned a bit like three-dimensional rebuses'.<sup>457</sup> Scatter art involved appropriated material incorporated into a 'low-tech, slapped together, nuts-and-bolts, cut-and-paste approach' where the rawness of the artist's expression superseded the specific content included in each artwork.<sup>458</sup> These works' intention was to establish a fictional *persona* for the artist as a psychologically unrestrained character. Allusions to mental illness and distress were conceptual elements in scatter art, evoked through the installations' affected mania.

Consistent with this style, Kilimnik's installations consist of apparently disordered arrangements of glitter, fake snow, theatrical blood, stuffed animals, soiled ballet shoes, mass media posters and piles of party drugs (figure 39).<sup>459</sup> Kilimnik assembled

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<sup>456</sup> 'Scatter Art' *Art + Culture Blog* (3 September 2013).

<sup>457</sup> R. Smith, 'Karen Kilimnik: Finding Meaning in Scatteredness', *New York Times* (1 June 2007), accessed 18 May 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/arts/design/30kili.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/arts/design/30kili.html?_r=1&).

<sup>458</sup> J.C. Welchman, *Art after Appropriation: Essays on Art in the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 40.

<sup>459</sup> L. Mulleavey and K. Mulleavey, 'Karen Kilimnik'.

these materials on a floor without a discernable organising principle or set of aesthetic concerns. The snow covers some objects and infested others, while some toys sit erect and others collapse. These installations' chaotic aesthetics represent a form of fandom through their evident emotionality, implying randomness, mania and compulsiveness consistent with an adolescent sensibility.<sup>460</sup> Thus critic Robert Mahoney, writing in the late 1990s, recognised that Kilimnik's installations contributed a discernibly feminine contribution to the scatter-art trend. Mahoney identified Kilimnik's choice of pop culture material and items associated with girlhood, such as ballet shoes, as 'all teen-age girl', implying that her engagement with pop-cultural material was regressive.<sup>461</sup> This analysis is a dominant theme in critical responses to her work, as with Peyton's art. In contrast to these works, Kilimnik's installations executed after the 1990s, such as her 2007 room decoration for her survey show at Philadelphia's Institute of Contemporary Art, replicated opulent nineteenth-century décor with plush furnishings and printed fabric wallpaper.<sup>462</sup> These later installations expressed, through imitation, her admiration for nineteenth-century decorative luxury but lacked the emotional immediacy of her scatter art.

The intensity of Kilimnik's fan attention on her subjects, which critics find disarming, and her art's relevance to this thesis's third research question (p. 32) is demonstrated by her seven-minute 2006 video collage *Kate Moss at the Beginning*. This work consists of edited found-footage showing the model during fashion show fittings, editorial shoots and in after-show interviews from the early 1990s, when Moss began her career. This remixed selection of filmed footage is without a defined narrative or conclusion. Instead it consists of repeated clips formulated in a rhythm similar to a song containing appropriated samples. In the video, a shot of Moss laughing is repeated in triplicate without a clear context for the repetition. In an editorial commentary written for the publically accessible on-line video archive *Ubuweb*, an anonymous critic interpreted the film as:

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<sup>460</sup> R. Mahoney, 'Karen Kilimnik at 303', *Artnet.com* (10 January 1997), accessed 19 May 2014 at [www.artnet.com/magazine\\_pre2000/reviews/mahoney/mahoney10-1-97.asp](http://www.artnet.com/magazine_pre2000/reviews/mahoney/mahoney10-1-97.asp).

<sup>461</sup> R. Mahoney, 'Karen Kilimnik at 303'.

<sup>462</sup> R. Smith, 'Karen Kilimnik: Finding Meaning'.

... an astonishing deconstruction of the vapidness of supermodel Kate Moss at the beginning of her career... It [is] as if a fashion magazine is torn asunder, revealing the mere pulp from which it is made.<sup>463</sup>

This interpretation reflects the writer's response to Kilimnik's source material, not the evidence in her artwork. For a fan, Moss's small gestures are captivating rather than vapid, and Kilimnik's repetition of the moments when Moss appeared on camera, therefore, can be seen to indicate a fan's thirst for insight and the illusion of parasocial intimacy with a celebrity, as Rebecca Rubin and Michael P. McHugh described in Chapter One (page 56).<sup>464</sup> The publically accessible clips that Kilimnik captured and repeated present Moss as animated and unscripted when seen before and after her participation in professional activities, such as posing for photographs and performing in a fashion show. Kilimnik's attentive capturing of these documented moments of apparent candid behaviour adhere to a fan's studious gathering of available and obscure information about an admired celebrity subject. This video supports critics' perception of Kilimnik as an obsessive fan, although the problematic nature of this obsession is not evident. An alternative interpretation of her obsessiveness could be expertise, as presented in Jensen's juxtaposition between cultural perceptions of fans and scholars.<sup>465</sup> From this point of view, *Kate Moss at the Beginning* demonstrates Kilimnik's attentive study of Moss. Kilimnik's drawings and paintings elaborate on themes that she developed in her scatter art, and they form the conceptual basis for *Kate Moss at the Beginning*. From this point forward, discussion will focus on Kilimnik's drawings, which comprise the body of her art production and critical engagement with her as an artist and fan.

Kilimnik gained cultural attention in the mid-1990s for doodle-like drawings combining text and imagery that replicated advertisements and editorial photographs for mass media fashion magazines. These drawings were primarily created with wax

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<sup>463</sup> 'Kate Moss at the Beginning', Ubuweb, accessed 4 September 2014 at [www.ubu.com/film/kilimnik\\_moss.html](http://www.ubu.com/film/kilimnik_moss.html).

<sup>464</sup> R.B. Rubin and M.P. McHugh, 'Development of Parasocial Interaction Relationships', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 31, no. 3 (1987), 279–292.

<sup>465</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 21.

crayon and graphite rather than with specialised artists' materials. Her technique and methods of representation in these drawings appear laboured and emotionally invested. Many of them contain clusters of multiple depictions of different, unrelated, subjects, as seen in her drawing *New York Outfit I Want* (figure 44). Like her scatter art arrangements, her drawings on notebook pages are without a clear composition or conceptual motivation, such as *Irresistible* (figure 43), her copy of an Estee Lauder ad, featuring model Elizabeth Hurley. Her figures are frequently featured adrift on otherwise empty pages, rather than drawn into surrounding environments, which structure indicates that Kilimnik is fixated on her subjects and disinterested in external context such as her drawing of Moss in a Calvin Klein advertisement (figure 42). Whereas Peyton composes her drawings to situate her subjects in space and to establish contextual surroundings, Kilimnik's figures do not have surrounding sets. Her chaotic representation of subjects in *New York Outfit I Want* exemplifies the mechanisms of her drawings. Instead of establishing context, her artistic attention is evidentially fixated on her figures' faces, bodies, and clothes. These studied sections of her drawings indicate her careful concentration, yet the physical portions, facial expressions and shading indicate technical failures. Because of the impression that she labours to replicate her source material and lacks the traditional technical skill to achieve this ambition, Kilimnik's drawings evoke a comparison with adolescents' fan art and teenagers' personal artistic expressions.<sup>466</sup>

In these drawings, Kilimnik simplifies her subjects' facial features and shortens the distance between their enlarged eyes and chins, thereby infantilising their appearance, similar to Peyton's alternations that feminise her masculine subjects. This structure can be seen in her depictions of Moss. Kilimnik's artistic attention is focused on her subjects' eyes and mouths as with her 1999 portrait of Moss, *Me in Russia, 1916, Outside the Village*. Comparison between Kilimnik's portrait (figure 48) and her source image (figure 47) demonstrate her typical infantilisation of Moss's angular face, which Kilimnik represents as rounded, with her features enlarged and placed towards the bottom of her head, like a child's facial structure. Noses are often reduced to nostrils in her drawings and only parallel lines indicate the bridge, as they do in her

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<sup>466</sup> E.B. Hurlock, 'The Spontaneous Drawings of Adolescents', *The Pedagogical Seminary and Journal of Genetic Psychology* 63, no. 1 (1943), 141–156.

1993 drawing of Moss titled *CK* (figure 42). Because she does not distribute her attention evenly across her subjects' faces, their stronger features appear artificially isolated and disconnected from the whole. She defines patches of cosmetic colour on her subjects' faces without identifying the shadows that imply bone structure and facial mass. Because of these effects, her facial forms resemble children's drawings, according to a study of children's cognitive responses to individual faces and their ability to read emotion in adult faces.<sup>467</sup> These qualities substantiate the critical interpretation of art as repressing regressive aspects of fandom. Alongside her celebrity figures, Kilimnik faithfully replicates the brand names and advertising copy from her source material, including the trademark sign when she copies a brand's product name (figure 42). She intersperses this appropriated text with original, emotionally infused, personal messages. This overlap of text and image enhances her work's adolescent and amateur appearance, since her use of appropriated text indicates that Kilimnik doggedly copied her source material. This impression matches her identity as a passive fan, not as a critic, of her material, in accordance with Sandvoss's observation that fans are often misperceived in mainstream cultural consciousness as passive and vulnerable to exploitative media influences.<sup>468</sup>

The sinister subtext that Rimanelli and others perceive in Kilimnik's work can be gleaned in *Kate Moss with Sparkles* (figure 40), her drawing from 1993. In this graphite and oil stick drawing, she appropriates a photograph of Moss that was taken by the English photographer Kate Garner (figure 41) for an editorial shoot in *Vogue Italia*. In Garner's photograph, Moss stands in a domestic bathroom wearing thick black thigh-high stockings, black panties and high-heels. This adult attire is contrasted by the large teddy bear that Moss holds against her nude chest. Moss's expression in Garner's photograph is blank, in accordance with conventions for fashion photography. In Kilimnik's drawing, however, Moss's proportions are distorted to exaggerate Moss's childlike appearance in Garner's photograph and Moss's facial expression implies unhappiness. In the drawings, an abstract object resembling an urn, made from glitter and glue, replaces the bathroom setting from Garner's photograph. The implications of this macabre object and Kilimnik's exaggeration of

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<sup>467</sup> S. Carey and R. Diamond, 'Are Faces Perceived as Configurations More by Adults Than by Children?', *Visual Cognition* 1, no. 2-3 (1994), 253-274.

<sup>468</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 2, 6-7, 11-18.

Moss's child-like appearance evokes issues of the exploitation of young celebrities, as described by music theorist Sheila Whiteley.<sup>469</sup> Kilimnik's glamorisation of Moss's apparent unease and sinister sexualisation demonstrate fans' potential willingness to condone exploitation of celebrities. Kilimnik's inclusion of an urn implies that Moss is a martyr for fans' entertainment. Her embodiment of fans' desires through her artistic attention therefore develops an aggressive undertone, since she represents the fans whose attention exploits Moss and other young stars.

This interpretation of Kilimnik's work can be extrapolated into readings of her overall choice of subjects in the 1990s. Kilimnik's selection of subjects has influenced others' perception of her work, although the forthcoming case studies in this chapter will demonstrate that critical judgement is determined by conspicuously fan-based aesthetic choices more than by celebrity subject matter alone. Throughout the 1990s and the early years in the twentieth century, Kilimnik predominantly drew and painted depictions of fashion models, including Twiggy, Moss (ie: figure 40), Emma Balfour, Amber Valetta and Cecilia Chancellor. Kilimnik also drew images of models with womanly appearances, such as Elizabeth Hurley (figure 43); however, the core of her early oeuvre was her portraits of models whose teenage fan bases identified with the models' youth.<sup>470</sup> During the 1990s, their success as models signified a style shift in high fashion that defined the era's aesthetic ethos.<sup>471</sup> Images of these models, including those copied by Kilimnik, focused attention on their adolescent appearances and affects (figure 40). Popular media in the 1990s connected these models' appearances with social ills, including eating disorders, suicide and drug abuse.<sup>472</sup> The cultural implications of Kilimnik's attention to these models, especially to Moss,

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<sup>469</sup> S. Whiteley, *Too Much Too Young: Popular Music, Age and Gender* (London: Psychology Press, 2005).

<sup>470</sup> D. Ferreday, 'A Waif's Progress: Reading Kate Moss through Affect, Ideology, and Ambivalence', *Feminist Media Studies* (ahead-of-print 2013), 7.

<sup>471</sup> J. Hartley and E. Rennie, "'About a Girl'" Fashion Photography as Photojournalism', *Journalism* 5, no. 4 (2004), 458–479.

<sup>472</sup> For interpretations of the cultural connotations of these models: R. Arnold, 'Heroin Chic', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 3, no. 3 (1999), 279-295; K. Way, 'Never Too Rich... or Too Thin: the Role of Stigma in the Social Construction of Anorexia Nervosa', in D. Maurer and J. Sobal, eds., *Eating Agendas: Food and Nutrition as Social Problems* (New Jersey: Aldine Transaction, 1995), 91-113; D. Ferreday, 'A Waif's Progress', 1-15.

imply potentially darker implications in Kilimnik's depictions because Moss is perceived as a celebrity with dark cultural concerns. The significance of her subjects' cultural reputations resembles the subtexts that were argued in the previous chapter to be imbedded in Peyton's artwork. As with Peyton's synchronicity between her facial features and her feminisation of her masculine subjects, there are aesthetic correspondences between Kilimnik's rough, apparently naïve and emotionally expressive method of art making and her subjects' physical appearances and cultural persona. Kilimnik's section of celebrity subjects is, therefore, consistent with her artistic identity and her signature style.

Kilimnik's paintings expand on the themes and the images that she developed in her drawings and her video homage to Moss. Unlike in her drawings, she does not intersperse attentively studied areas with neglected sections but covers her canvases completely with paint, although environmental details do not receive her attention with the same intensity as her figures' faces and garments. In the style of insecure artists, she avoids replicating complicated anatomy like hands and feet in her drawings and her paintings; rather, she focuses her paintings on a single subject situated in a fully coloured context. In general, she gravitates towards a sombre and dramatic palette. Her colour choices contrast with Peyton's lighter and brighter signature palette. Peyton dilutes her oil paint, creating on her boards delicate washes that resemble watercolours, while Kilimnik keeps her painted surfaces heavy and saturates her canvases with colour, as seen in her portrait of 2005 *Paris Hilton, Marie Antoinette Out for a Walk at Her Petite Hermitage, France* (figure 45). This disparity in surface appearance might account for different critical readings about the tone and emotional resonance of their work. Kilimnik's figures are often light-skinned and wear bright coloured clothes, but are positioned in the foreground against solid dark backdrops or shadowy, sketchy, surroundings (figure 48). As with her drawings, the subjects of Kilimnik's paintings appear to eclipse their surroundings. This visual impression illustrates their celebrity status as being distinct from ordinary contexts.

Although Kilimnik provides scant narrative information in her subjects' surroundings, she develops complex fictions through her titles. *Me as Elizabeth Taylor in National Velvet Before Horse Race* is an early example of Kilimnik's use of titles to confuse

viewers and to signal her pronounced identification with celebrities. Her titles perform the function that Elliot describes as:

... drawing symbolic boundaries around the self and the other (or more precisely, the other at a distance). The symbolic dimensions structuring the relationship between fan and celebrity becoming blurred... there is an imaginary idealized merging of fan and celebrity.<sup>473</sup>

Many of her paintings have titles comprised of ten words or more, expressing her fantasies of merging her identity with her celebrity subjects' *personae* in a sentence that misidentifies her subject as a self-portrait and gives a fictional location and date for the image. The dates are bewilderingly anachronistic, as with Kilimnik's 2005 portrait of Paris Hilton, which she titled *Paris Hilton, Marie Antoinette Out for a Walk at Her Petite Hermitage, France, 1750* (figure 45). Since her paintings do not directly include the sections of commercial or personal text that she incorporates into her drawings, her lengthy titles have been recognised by critics, such as Adrian Searle, as the primary indicators of the complex fandom evident in her paintings.<sup>474</sup> Like slash fiction writers and other fans customising pop culture texts, according to Fiske's description of active fandom (page 77), Kilimnik asserts creative ownership over celebrities by casting them into her personal narrative fictions. The predominant fantasy that Kilimnik appears to assert across her *oeuvre* is ownership and dominance over celebrities, whose images she employs for her personal use.

The implied intimacy involved in this form of elaborate para-social interaction, in which Kilimnik appears to embody a power position, raises questions with critics about her awareness of the actual distance between herself, as a fan, and the celebrities she idolises. Kilimnik's overt demonstration of celebrity identification may contribute to Rimanelli's characterisation of her as expressing 'love and longing, with maybe a frisson of the stalker sensibility'.<sup>475</sup> These concerns about Kilimnik's purpose are supported in an article wherein McCutcheon, Lange and Houran argue that an 'over-identification with celebrities' and high levels of 'psychological

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<sup>473</sup> A. Elliot, *The Mourning of John Lennon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 136.

<sup>474</sup> A. Searle, 'Who's That Girl', *The Guardian* (22 February 2007), accessed 15 September 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/feb/22/art.adriansearle](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/feb/22/art.adriansearle).

<sup>475</sup> D. Rimanelli, 'Too Much Isn't Enough', *Artform* (September 2011), accessed 15 September 2014 at [www.deitch.com/artists/press\\_text.php?pressId=14](http://www.deitch.com/artists/press_text.php?pressId=14).

absorption' are indicators of potentially pathological forms of fandom.<sup>476</sup> Elliot extends this concern to a clear warning when he writes: 'Although fandom can be a routine aspect of forging of self-identity in contemporary societies, the emotional transmutation from fandom to fanaticism is profoundly frightening'.<sup>477</sup> Kilimnik's work is not explicitly violent or destructive, unlike the art presented in the forthcoming chapter, yet her fantasies illustrate the transition and trigger the response that Elliot describes. However, in the context of an artistic fantasy, Kilimnik's identification can be interpreted as a safe form of fan fiction, akin to slash fiction, which creatively expands on the identification that Elliot and Sandvoss perceived as being routine aspect[s] of forging of self-identity. By claiming a celebrity's identity for her pseudo-self-portraits, Kilimnik's use of celebrities as surrogates demonstrates Sandvoss's argument that fans' fantasies involving celebrities are methods of expressing their own identities.<sup>478</sup>

Kilimnik's 1998 watercolour *Me – I Forgot the Wire Cutters – Getting the Wire Cutters from the Car to Break into Stonehenge, 1982* (figure 46) represents an example of her extreme form of celebrity identification. Despite the painting being titled as a self-portrait, the female figure is an image of Kate Moss. Kilimnik's source material for this image of Moss is a 1993 photograph taken by the fashion photographer Mario Testino for the Russian edition of *Vogue* magazine. The original image presents Moss approaching a car's open window in a narratively ambiguous editorial spread. Kilimnik's drawing casts Moss as a sinister character; her facial expression is vacant in both images, thereby rendering her character's purposes and motives opaque. Although Moss's features are not clearly defined and her identity is obscured in Kilimnik's title, she is recognisable from Kilimnik's frequent depictions of her. Kilimnik's *Me in Russia, 1916, Outside the Village* (figure 48) is a similar watercolour painting of Moss from 1999. The painting replicates another photograph by Testino from the same editorial spread as *Me – I Forgot the Wire Cutters – Getting the Wire Cutters from the Car to Break into Stonehenge, 1982*. Testino's original image (figure 47) presents Moss dressed in a checked suit and lounging on her

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<sup>476</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 67.

<sup>477</sup> A. Elliot, *The Mourning*, 136.

<sup>478</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 95–123.

stomach on an ornate sofa. She lifts herself up slightly on her arms and stares vacantly at the camera. Her blank facial expression appears to deflect the viewers' gazes. In Kilimnik's version, Moss's face is plumper than it is in reality, and her expression looks placid.

Explicit expressions of celebrity identification are less pronounced in Kilimnik's work in the second decade of the twenty-first century, when her focus shifted away from celebrity subjects with adolescent audiences towards imagery associated with girlhood. Ballet, horses and fairy-tales replaced her problematic images of models like Moss. The sub-cultural elements in Kilimnik's scatter art installations, such as her references to illicit drug use and her use of sexually provocative source images, exemplified in her 1993 drawing *Kate Moss With Sparkles* (figure 40), became less evident in her twenty-first century work. Admiration remains a central theme in Kilimnik's later work but her choice of subjects evokes fewer ethical concerns about the relationships between fans and celebrities.

### **Critical Reception of Kilimnik's Artworks and Fandom**

A publically available bibliography for Kilimnik, published on her European gallery's website, documents that her artwork has been reviewed and profiled extensively in European, North American and Asian publications, including *Elle*, *Frieze*, *The Guardian*, *Modern Painters*, *Monopole*, *the New Yorker*, *the New York Times*, *Texte zur Kunst* and *Vogue*.<sup>479</sup> In addition to articles, her work has been featured in over a dozen museum and gallery catalogue essays and art books. In this section, an overview is provided for this body of criticism and its relationship to theories about fandom and fans' popular images.

In an article about Kilimnik and Peyton, British newspaper critic Laura Cummings makes the strongest case against Kilimnik and articulates the central criticisms repeated elsewhere about her art. Addressing both Peyton and Kilimnik, she asks rhetorically:

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<sup>479</sup> Accessed at 14 September 2014 at [spruethmagers.com/artists/karen\\_kilimnik](http://spruethmagers.com/artists/karen_kilimnik)

Wan and whimsical paintings – why does anyone want to make them? Why does any self-respecting painter ever set out to be feeble?... American women who seem to have created such a strong market out of pitiful weakness... her paintings are so flaccid and flavourless, and at the same time glib, you couldn't possibly pin them down to a 'point'.<sup>480</sup>

Cummings answers her question by dismissing Kilimnik's art as 'the visual equivalent of a little girl's diary', which she interprets as evidence of Kilimnik's pathological regression. In offering this analysis, Cummings suggests that Kilimnik exploits fans and fan-expression by purposefully mimicking an adolescent aesthetic. But Cummings does not propose an explanation for why Kilimnik's work resonates with viewers and collectors. Since interest in Kilimnik's art is the basis for her commercial success, Cummings's disparagement of Kilimnik's work as 'feeble' cannot be accurate, since weak art would not elicit the strong reactions that Kilimnik's work evokes from Cummings and her fellow critics. Strangely, Cummings's review fails to address or even admit to the 'frisson of the stalker sensibility', that Rimanelli recognises, and so fails to see that the darker undercurrents, discussed earlier with regards to *Kate Moss with Sparkles*, counterbalance the decorative and adoring elements that Cummings criticises, thereby creating a psychologically complex portrait of fan desires.

Other critics acknowledge that Kilimnik's work successfully evokes unease in viewers, indicating that her technical weaknesses – such as flaws in realistic renderings and an unsophisticated aesthetic – might be expressive strengths. Kilimnik's ability to elicit passionate rejections by critics, Cummings included, demonstrates her works' power to represent uncomfortable tensions embedded in fans' relationships with celebrities. Smith, for example, described Kilimnik's effusive depictions in 2007 as 'girlish and demonic' and labelled her artistic persona as a 'woman-child', which is a characterisation supported by Kilimnik's artwork.<sup>481</sup> But in adding the quality of 'demonic' to the mix, Smith summons up the macabre subtexts

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<sup>480</sup> L. Cumming, 'The Kitsch Is Back', *The Observer* (4 March 2007), accessed 10 September 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/mar/04/art](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/mar/04/art).

<sup>481</sup> R. Smith, 'Karen Kilimnik: Finding Meaning in Scatteredness', *New York Times* (1 June 2007), accessed 18 May 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/arts/design/30kili.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/arts/design/30kili.html?_r=1&).

and complex celebrity identification that critics have overlooked in McGinley's photographs and in Peyton's paintings.

Other critics have seen similar tensions in Kilimnik's work. As critic Adam Lindemann wrote: 'Hers [is] a fully kitsch-ified, candy-coated world that looked saccharine at first, but that reveal[s] itself, on closer inspection, to be dark and disturbing'.<sup>482</sup> For Lindemann, Smith and Rimanelli, Kilimnik's art is compelling because its seemingly adoring surface narratives turn out to convey macabre subliminal meanings. In sum, Jensen's observation that the popular imagination portrays fandom as obsessive, potentially dangerous, delusional and motivated by fundamental inadequacies is reflected in critical responses to Kilimnik's work.<sup>483</sup>

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter when considering the critical reception to Peyton's artwork, a central theme in writings about Kilimnik's art focuses on its resemblance to adolescent expressions. Examples of this approach include John Walker's description of her work as 'deliberately tentative and resembling the jottings in a teenage girl's journal'.<sup>484</sup> Debates about the earnestness of her expression and its potential to exemplify problematic aspects of celebrity and fan culture are also reoccurring themes in criticism of her work. A writer in *Burlington Magazine* perceived Kilimnik's alleged cynicism as her work's most troubling flaw and wrote, 'A protective ironic gloss [exists in Kilimnik's art] that prevents any earnest emotional response, and indeed any vigorous intellectual engagement'.<sup>485</sup> Steven Stern wrote in *Frieze* that Kilimnik, alongside Peyton, embodies a 'faux-naivety', which he proposed was 'play-acting'.<sup>486</sup> Peter Eleey, in contrast, has questioned the value of interpreting the intentionality of her technique when he writes: 'The problem [with interpreting Kilimnik's art] is that viewers are asked to indulge the work's poor craftsmanship as an essential part of the artist's project'.<sup>487</sup> Her perceived sincerity

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<sup>482</sup> A. Lindemann, 'Karen Kilimnik's Teenage Dream', *The New York Observer* (16 May 2012), accessed 15 September 2014 at [www.adamlindemann.com/karen-kilimniks-teenage-dream/](http://www.adamlindemann.com/karen-kilimniks-teenage-dream/).

<sup>483</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 9.

<sup>484</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 128.

<sup>485</sup> J. Stonard, 'Pop in the Age of Boom: Richard Hamilton's 'Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?''', *The Burlington Magazine* 149, no. 1254 (2007), 607-620.

<sup>486</sup> S. Stern, 'The Uses of Enchantment', *Frieze*, Issue 81, March 2004, 66-71.

compels these writers to dismiss her work and question its suitability for serious art discourse.

In contrast to Cummings and Stern, other writers have seen her apparent childishness as emblematic of artistic authenticity, and referenced Kilimnik's biography to defend her art as authentic expression rather than as parody. For these critics, the legitimacy of Kilimnik's status as an artist on the periphery of an 'insider' or 'outsider' status can be justified because of her truncated experience with higher education and her distance from centres of mainstream art-world production and exhibition. Eeley in particular has addressed the political and potentially ethical implications of her work and its popular success, writing:

[Kilimnik is prime example of an] exhausted and finally pretentious brand of work that revels in the bad drawing of fame- and fairy-tale-focused teens.... Art school MFAs who self-consciously use [appropriated pop-culture] material without a focused agenda necessarily touch upon the sticky questions of class (and often race) that surround an aesthetic identified with artists who were often mentally ill, poor, or simply ignored by the high-art establishment of which these artists are trying to become a part. Kilimnik's appropriation avoids these political problems – she impersonates what could easily have been herself at an earlier age, borrowing from a culture that feels native to her relative background...<sup>488</sup>

Eeley's acknowledgement of Kilimnik's 'relative background' in contrast to 'art school MFAs' credits her with authenticity because, as Jensen asserted, attitudes towards fandom are coloured by class connotations and class prejudices.<sup>489</sup>

In addition to being portrayed as regressive and suspect, Kilimnik's art generates critical concern that her form of fandom is a demonstration of fanaticism. Kilimnik does not overtly depict or narratively imply stalking in her work, yet her myopic attention to her celebrity subjects and her labour-intensive drawing technique give credence to Rimanelli's interpretation of her work. For Rimanelli and his peers, her

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<sup>487</sup> P. Eeley, 'Karen Kilimnik', *Brooklyn Rail* (1 July 2002), accessed 15 September 2014 at [www.brooklynrail.org/2002/07/artseen/karen-kilimnik](http://www.brooklynrail.org/2002/07/artseen/karen-kilimnik).

<sup>488</sup> P. Eeley, 'Karen Kilimnik'.

<sup>489</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 21.

art and her reluctance to contribute to the public forums devoted to artists' voices connote evidence that fans are anti-social and immature.<sup>490</sup> Although the studies by McCutcheon, Lange and Houran that were discussed in Chapter One (page X) indicate that pathological forms of fandom are expressions of pre-existing mental illness rather than of a distinct condition, Rimanelli's description of Kilimnik's art as expressing a 'stalker sensibility' equates fans' fantasies and self-presentation with aberrant behaviour.

Kilimnik's disruption of distinctions between her identity and her media attachments evokes Jensen's characterisation of the stereotypical fan as:

inadequate... defined as someone who is making up for some inherent lack. He or she seeks identity, connection and meaning via celebrities... [This fan] has fragile self-esteem, weak or non-existent social alliances, a dull and monotonous 'real' existence.<sup>491</sup>

Whether Kilimnik is a fan according to this description is difficult to verify since, as will be discussed in a forthcoming section of this chapter, she evades direct engagement with media forums devoted to artists' voices. However, her commercial success and the attention offered to her from the press and from art audiences indicate that her possible alienation from interpersonal social alliances is elective. The mesh of identities that she signals in her titles can be interpreted as a variation on Peyton's concept of 'collapse' (1.3, p. 125). For Peyton, this collapse occurs when she depicts her subjects' features as resembling her own. Kilimnik enacts a similar form of imagined intimacy with her subjects through her deliberate confusion of identities in her titles. Both instances demonstrate Harrington's and Bielby's application of Winnicott's theories of 'transitional objects' to Fan Studies, which is discussed in Chapter One (2.4). As this theory shows, fans use celebrities' images to 'challenge the boundaries between internal and external realities', as Kilimnik and Peyton do in their artworks.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 1.

<sup>491</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology', 18.

<sup>492</sup> C. L. Harrington and D. Bielby, 'Introduction: New Direction in Fan Studies', *The American Behavioural Scientists* 48, no 7 (March 2005), 133.

### **Kilimnik's Attitude to Fandom and Herself as a Fan as Seen in Her Art**

Kilimnik's published quotes do not provide critical insight into her work or her working process. Instead, her laconic media self-presentation enforces critics' interpretations of her as an anti-social, passive and emotionally regressed fan. For example, in 1992 Kilimnik participated in a profile of her for the *Philadelphia Daily News*.<sup>493</sup> Mark de la Vina, reporter for this article, wrote: "I don't really know", "I can't remember" and "That's another question I don't want to talk about" are often her responses'.<sup>494</sup> As with Peyton's and Warhol's interview personae, Kilimnik's elusive responses to interviewers obscure her intellectual engagement with her subject matter.

Following the article in the *Philadelphia Daily News*, she did not engage with the press for almost two decades. Following this silence, her participation in interviews has been evasive. She contributed, for example, to *Harper's Bazaar* magazine only to reveal that she made doll clothes as a child and aspired to be a fashion designer before focusing her attention on fine art.<sup>495</sup> The interviews conducted in 1992 and 2011 present her manner of discourse as being childlike. Her enthusiasms appear unchallenged, and she evades direct discussion of her artistic practices and of her source material. This ambivalent attitude towards public discussion of her work is also evident in a short email interview that she conducted in 2010 with fashion designers Laura Mulleavey and Kate Mulleavey for *Interview* magazine.<sup>496</sup> Contrary to journalistic convention, the Mulleavey sisters printed the questions that Kilimnik did not answer. She answered questions about pop culture and consumer products with enthusiasm but left blanks for questions about her art. When she answered their questions, her responses were brief and lacking in nuance. In one answer, she explained that she repeated sections of the movie *Heathers* in a 1992-93 art film

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<sup>493</sup> M. de la Vina, 'Scatter Brain Kilimnik'.

<sup>494</sup> M. de la Vina, 'Scatter Brain Kilimnik'.

<sup>495</sup> V. Hyland, 'Karen Kilimnik Talks Fashion, Art and Dressing Up Troll Dolls', *Harper's Bazaar* (11 March 2011), accessed 15 September 2014 at [www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/articles/karen-kilimnik-interview-031111](http://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/articles/karen-kilimnik-interview-031111).

<sup>496</sup> L. Mulleavey and K. Mulleavey, 'Karen Kilimnik'.

because she wanted to extend the film to six hours. She offered no further insight into the effect that repetition had on this film's narrative or emotional resonance for viewers.

Kilimnik's fugitive relationship with the media is relevant because of the disjuncture between her dual identities as an art-star and a fan. This tension was identified by de la Vina, who wrote in 1992, '[W]hen Kilimnik spots her quotables on paper, or sees her correct age in print, it's a bit unnerving, mainly because she's now a media subject herself'.<sup>497</sup> Her reluctance to engage directly public forums for artists' voices suggests three alternative explanations for her silence. 1) The tensions demonstrated in her art between idolatry and proprietary emotional attachments for celebrities might explain her wariness about embodying her status as a media subject. 2) Kilimnik might be concerned that her art's allure depends on its ambiguities, and her voice would limit audiences' intuitive interpretations of her art. 3) A justification for her reluctant media persona is her emulation of Warhol, whom she cited in the *Philadelphia Daily News* article as a formative influence on her artistic aspirations.<sup>498</sup> Like Warhol, her rejection of theoretical engagement with her art reinforces superficial readings of her work rather than interpretations of her work as being demonstrations of fandom's emotional, not intellectual, investments. This thesis will not advance a hypothesis for Kilimnik's hesitancy to participate in her press, but rather has focussed upon the effect that her silence and limited quotes has had on interpretations of her art and the perception that she personifies anti-social and regressive forms of fandom.

In the next section of this chapter, Kilimnik's work will be compared with art that appears to be more sophisticated in order to establish the premise that aesthetic choices and artists' self-presentation determine interpretations of their media attachment.

## II. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

### Introduction

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<sup>497</sup> M. de la Vina, 'Scatter Brain Kilimnik'.

<sup>498</sup> M. de la Vina, 'Scatter Brain Kilimnik'.

Lucien Freud, Amie Dicke and Marc Quinn have articulated in interviews their affinities for their common subject, Kate Moss, yet they have produced art that is less recognisable as expressions of fandom than are Kilimnik's portraits of the model. The immediacy of Kilimnik's fan affinities distinguishes her work from these other artists' fan productivity; however, in this section, I will demonstrate that ambiguities and tensions apparent in Kilimnik's art also exist in depictions of Moss by Freud, Dicke and Quinn. Although Freud, Dicke and Quinn have voiced their adoration of Moss, critics do not identify them as pathological fans, and none of them can be characterised as a fan. In this section, critics' and audiences' contrasting treatment of their work will be investigated through showing the underlining similarities in their stated motives and their portrayals of Moss.

### **Kilimnik's Drawings of Moss Contrasted with Lucian Freud's Portrait of Moss**

Unlike Kilimnik and Peyton, whose paintings of Moss are based on publically sourced material, Lucian Freud (Berlin, 1922–London, 2011) painted his 2002 *Naked Portrait* of her from life.<sup>499</sup> Freud is selected for discussion in this chapter because his portrait of Moss represents a factually verified bond between the artist and celebrity. A contrast between expression of his factual intimacy with Moss and Kilimnik's expression of fictional fannish identification defines the nature of fandom in her art and helps identify manifestations of fans' identification in work by Kilimnik, Dicke and Quinn. According to Sandvoss's dictum about the necessary distance between having fans and celebrity, Freud did not paint Moss from the perspective of a fan although he is an admirer of qualities that comprise Moss's celebrity persona. Unlike fans' textual productivity, his work represents an authentic, not a fantasy, intimacy with Moss. The lack of dissimilitude between his treatment of Moss and his portraits of non-famous subjects substantiates this distinction. However, Freud pronounced his admiration for Moss in the media and so his portrait functions as a counterpoint to Kilimnik's work, highlighting how her fan identity is represented in her art. As an indication of his appreciation for Moss, rather than as a critique of her celebrity, Freud's personal intimacy with Moss was publically demonstrated in a photograph of them sharing an avuncular embrace in his bed.<sup>500</sup> He also tattooed her back with twin

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<sup>499</sup> M. McGinness, 'Lucian Freud', *Quadrant* 55, no. 9 (2011), 19.

<sup>500</sup> '10 Lucian Freud Paintings That Will Make You Fear Flesh', *Huffington Post* (19 October 2013),

sparrows, a personally significant symbol.<sup>501</sup> In addition to evidence of an interpersonal affinity, Freud expressed his appreciation for her professional talent. Freud, an artist who rarely engages with the media, told a newspaper reporter for *The Guardian* that he admired Moss for being ‘physically intelligent’ – a comment that recognises her professional gift as a model.<sup>502</sup>

Freud’s oil painting shows Moss lounging on a single bed (figure 49) in the artist’s studio. Her features are unrecognisably heavy in his painting, and her pregnancy is not defined. Instead, her body appears bloated and slovenly. Freud’s signature application of chunky swatches of paint slathered on the canvas with a palette knife renders Moss’s flesh thick and blotchy. Freud’s portrait of Moss also adheres to art historian Matthew Kieran’s description of Freud’s oil paintings, which are primarily of nudes, as:

highly expressive – the way the mottled flesh tones, contrasting textures of different parts of the body and differing proportions are conveyed prescribes a fascination with and understanding of what it is to apprehend another just as a body.<sup>503</sup>

Critic Jonathan Turner described Freud’s portrait of Moss as ‘brutal, unflattering and earthy’.<sup>504</sup> The rough appearance of Moss presents a comparison with Kilimnik’s unfinished, distorted and scrappy depictions of the model, which, nevertheless, idealise her subject.

Freud’s painting’s rough, unflattering appearance surpasses the gritty aesthetic associated with Moss’s early work as a model. Art historians John Hartley and Ellie Rennie described the genre of photography through which Moss’s career developed in

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accessed 12 September 2014 at [www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/19/lucian-freud\\_n\\_4099022.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/19/lucian-freud_n_4099022.html).

<sup>501</sup> D. Garner, ‘A Portrait Painted in Heavy Strokes’, *The New York Times* (21 November 2013), accessed 13 September 2014 at [www.nytimes.com/2013/11/22/books/breakfast-with-lucian-by-geordie-greig.html?](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/22/books/breakfast-with-lucian-by-geordie-greig.html?).

<sup>502</sup> M. Mills, ‘A Date with Lucien Freud’, *The Guardian* (22 July 2011), accessed 12 September 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/jul/22/lucian-freud-painter-interview](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/jul/22/lucian-freud-painter-interview).

<sup>503</sup> M. Kieran, ‘Pornographic Art’, *Philosophy and Literature* 25, no. 1 (2001), 31–45.

<sup>504</sup> J. Turner, ‘Moss Appeal’, *ARTnews* 105 (9 October 2006), 42.

the early 1990s as ‘dirty realism’.<sup>505</sup> Alex Katz, another painter who celebrated Moss in a portrait painted from life, described her as ‘completely ordinary. That’s what makes her extraordinary’.<sup>506</sup> In this context, Freud’s painting of Moss is consistent with her public image and the imagery of her that Kilimnik used as source material. Like Kilimnik’s paintings, his portrait paradoxically humanises and objectifies Moss by celebrating the qualities that earned her celebrity status. Despite Moss’s affiliation with an aesthetic that Hartley and Rennie have identified as ‘intimate and bleak’, Freud’s portrait is remarkably blunt. Kilimnik’s method of representing Moss coheres with her *persona* and the attendant aesthetic references related to her look, whereas Freud’s depiction seems to mock Moss and the style of photography that brought her into public attention. With its muddy colours, graceless pose and heavy paint, Freud appears to have been aiming for an unglamorous insight into Moss or to problematise the luxurious associations of her celebrity status.

Art critic Rotraut de Clerck argues: ‘Freud’s portraits do not focus on the face as the representative of mental life, intelligence, thoughts and temperament; for Lucien Freud the whole person is the body and *visa versa*’.<sup>507</sup> This assessment, echoed by other critics of his work, including Kieran and Turner, presents the possibility that Freud’s portrait represents insights into Moss’s private personality beyond the enacted intimacy of ‘dirty realist’ imagery. As a painting, not as a photograph, Freud’s portrait of Moss bypasses her beauty. The cultural and commercial reception of *Naked Portrait* was intricately interwoven with Moss’s media identity; however, her celebrity status is not evident in Freud’s artwork – making his portrait of Moss an example that helps define the fan qualities in portraits of Moss by Dicke, Kilimnik and Quinn.

### **Kilimnik’s Portraits of Kate Moss Contrasted with Aimee Dicke’s Collages of Moss**

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<sup>505</sup> J. Hartley and E. Rennie, “‘About a Girl’”, 458–479.

<sup>506</sup> D. Cohen, ‘Gallery Going’, *The New York Sun* (28 August 2003), accessed 13 September 2014 at [www.artcritical.com/DavidCohen/SUN16.htm](http://www.artcritical.com/DavidCohen/SUN16.htm).

<sup>507</sup> R. de Clerck, ‘HOW Deep Is the Skin? Surface and Depth in Lucian Freud’s Female Nudes’, *The Female Body: Inside and Outside* (London: Karnac Books, 2013), 45–46.

In contrast with Freud but in keeping with fan productivity, Amie Dicke (b. Rotterdam, 1978–) directly appropriates images of celebrities from fashion magazines. Whereas Kilimnik and Peyton rendered these images in paint, Dicke expresses her fan affinity through collage. Unlike Kilimnik and Peyton, Dicke’s art does not juxtapose obvious signs of adoration with aggression. She expresses her fan feelings in interviews but she does not display the tensions – between what Rimanelli describes as ‘love and longing’ – with signs of assault. This section argues that signs of adoration and fan attachment are evident in Dicke’s art, as well as her public statements about her art, but the subtlety of these signs affects critical interpretation of her work because her art is misread as a critique of fashion, rather than an expression of fannish admiration.

For Dicke’s ‘cut-out’ collages, exhibited between 2001 and 2005, she sliced pages from high-fashion magazines with X-Acto® knives. She removed the models’ flesh and their facial features from images where they posed alone or in groups in this series of collages (figure 50). These interventions left the models’ hands, hair, feet and upper lips untouched. Created separately from her series of ‘cut-outs’ are individual works that Dicke made in 2006 and 2007 by burning, peeling apart, sandpapering, snubbing cigarettes onto and studding magazine pages with planted flowers. Dicke also hammered magazine pages with nails in the N’kondi style of fetish sculpture, which are wooden Congolese religious figures pierced with blades and nails.<sup>508</sup> These works initially appear both violent and elegant since Dicke’s organised compositions, attention to texture and minimalist presentation adhere to high fashion’s own aesthetic standards. Unlike Kilimnik’s scatter art appropriations of found materials, Dicke’s use of pre-existing, publically accessible source material does not signify chaos or disorder. The positions and design of her cuts are controlled and ostensibly determined by conceptual decisions, not by unruly emotional expression. Dicke was selected for discussion in this chapter because her collages demonstrate signs of violence towards celebrities’ images and her statements about her art express explicit identification with celebrities; however, critics have not interpreted her work as demonstrating pathological forms of fandom. According to

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<sup>508</sup> E. Bassani, ‘Kongo Nail Fetishes from the Chiloango River Area’, *African Arts* 10, no. 3 (1977), 36–40.

the central argument in this thesis, Dicke's art is perceived differently than Kilimnik's art because critics mistakenly overlook her identification, and the sophisticated aesthetics of her art do not comply with cultural assumptions about fans and fan expression.

In statements about her work, Dicke acknowledges that her identification with her celebrity subjects is the central theme of her artwork. She described the empty spaces that she created with her X-Acto® knives as 'voids' through which fans, herself included, project fantasies. According to her, 'We [fans] project our own uncertainties on to the imagery of ideals and on to each other... the voids that I create [in the pre-existing photographs] are spaces to insert myself'.<sup>509</sup> These voids therefore function as a reflection of Sandvoss's theory that identification determines fans' attachments and fans aspire to connect their individual identities with the media they admire.<sup>510</sup> This statement also offers a plausible explanation for how Dicke's art can appear like a violent attack on the models' images, yet still assert her identity as their fan. In the context of her statement about her conceptual motives, her 'voids' symbolically illustrate the introjection that Kilimnik enacts through her titles.

Unlike Kilimnik, however, Dicke critically engages with the concept of fandom in interviews and public statements about her work. She enunciates her fan position through effusive titles such as *oooh Kate*, a 2003 cut-out appropriation of a brightly coloured headshot portrait of Moss (figure 50). As with Kilimnik's drawings, this work leaves the caption copy and Moss's name intact in the final image. Dicke describes this series as being a variation on fans' identification with celebrities, akin to Kilimnik's use of autobiographical references and first-person narratives in the titles for paintings depicting celebrities. Dicke began her cut-out series in 2001, when she was studying in Manhattan and, as she explained, 'projected [her] loneliness onto the city, where the most familiar faces were those of the supermodels on the buildings and in the magazines'.<sup>511</sup> Rather than reject Manhattan's focus on glamour and

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<sup>509</sup> S. Hoban, 'Sculptural Relief', *AD-S Magazine* (January 2011), 143.

<sup>510</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 21–22.

<sup>511</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'Amie Dicke Talks to Ana Finel Honigman', *Saatchi Online* (21 February 2007), accessed 15 September 2014 at [www.magazine.saatchionline.com/culture/reports-from/los-angeles-reports-from/amie\\_dickie\\_talks\\_to\\_ana\\_finel](http://www.magazine.saatchionline.com/culture/reports-from/los-angeles-reports-from/amie_dickie_talks_to_ana_finel).

beauty, Dicke anthropomorphised static images and assimilated them into her identity and into her art, asserting her own identity as an empowered fan onto the images themselves.<sup>512</sup>

Moss is a recurring subject of Dicke's work. In 2006 she produced a unique work, titled *Scandeleuse* (figure 53), consisting of a single magazine page and industrial nails of different sizes. *Scandeleuse* was created from the cover of an issue of French *Vogue* dedicated to Moss and celebrating her career. This work was made concurrent with Moss's public shaming for cocaine abuse.<sup>513</sup> In this context, *Scandeleuse* serves as a fan's commentary about the media scapegoating of Moss. Dicke stressed this point by positioning the largest nails through Moss's palms, as a reference to a celebrity 'crucifixion' by the mass market media. Despite this emphatic assertion of a fan's idolisation of Moss, *Scandeleuse* resembles a high-end fashion product and its aesthetics determine its reception. Whereas Kilimnik's artworks resemble fans' amateur imagery, with strong colours and awkward application, Dicke's use of a minimalist metallic and monochrome palette duplicates the appearance of luxury fashion accessories, thereby benefiting from high fashion's elevated status.<sup>514</sup>

Dicke has discussed the paradox of fans' consumption beyond purchasing and acquiring consumer products, such as the fashion accessories that her art resembles. In a 2009 interview, she said:

I like the word 'consuming.' It means to destroy or expend through use. It means to use up, to absorb. Buying is not enough.... You have to understand or feel the object or the idea that you consume. Alternately, you need to do something to it. You need to transform it. Then it becomes your own.<sup>515</sup>

Based on this quote, Dicke's work becomes an extension of fashion historian Rebecca Arnold's idea that fans of fashion 'devour fashion visually, imbibing the images, even

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<sup>512</sup> Personal telephone interviews with Amie Dicke (1-17 January 2005).

<sup>513</sup> R. Kaulingfreks and R. Ten Bos, 'On Faces and Defacement: the Case of Kate Moss', *Business Ethics: A European Review* 16, no. 3 (2007), 302-312.

<sup>514</sup> R. Holmes, 'Review of the Decade: Fashion', *The Guardian* (5 January 2010), accessed 15 September 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/gallery/2010/jan/05/review-decade-fashion](http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/gallery/2010/jan/05/review-decade-fashion).

<sup>515</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'Amie Dicke Talks'.

if no literal purchase is made'.<sup>516</sup> However, her critics interpret Dicke's art as a critique of fashion. Writer Brian Sholis, for example, assumed that her cut-out series to be a critique of contemporary beauty standards. He wrote:

[The cut-outs'] incompleteness speaks to the alienation many of us feel when regarding our own bodies, and the isolation of individual parts mimics how we often take a piece-by-piece approach to bridging the discrepancy between how we look and our ideal selves.<sup>517</sup>

In this analysis, Sholis assumed that Dicke retains critical distance from her subject matter, and does not see that she expresses fans' interjection and identification with celebrities.

Dicke's collages instead demonstrate Henry Jenkins's notion of 'textual poachers' as empowered, creative and potentially subversive consumers.<sup>518</sup> Jenkins, employing philosopher Michel de Certeau's term 'poaching' to describe audiences' use of mass media texts beyond their designed purpose, argues that fans are active interpreters of their admired texts rather than passive consumers and that they shape the development and meaning of mass-produced products.<sup>519</sup> Dicke's appropriation in the form of collage, assemblage and photomontage can be understood as being akin to fans' opening primary texts to accommodate alternate and subcultural purposes. With his discussion of slash fiction and fans' other active re-workings of media material, Jenkins created a framework for understanding how fans can simultaneously admire and revere texts while creating unorthodox and resistant uses for them.<sup>520</sup> Dicke enacts this form of fan engagement through her cut-out series.

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<sup>516</sup> R. Arnold, *Fashion, Desire and Anxiety: Image and Morality in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: I.B Tauris Publishers, 2001), 3.

<sup>517</sup> B. Sholis, *Amie Dicke: Void* (London: Artimo, 2005), 3.

<sup>518</sup> H. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*.

<sup>519</sup> J. Frow, 'Michel de Certeau and the Practice of Representation', *Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (1991), 57.

<sup>520</sup> H. Jenkins, 'Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 5, no. 2 (1988), 85–107.

Consistent with Dicke's other cutouts, Moss's identity is concealed through strategic cuts in *Overview* (figure 51), a 2004 appropriation of an advertisement for the luxury designer Roberto Cavalli (figure 52). The original ran regularly in mainstream fashion magazines and newspapers throughout 2007. Based on its ubiquity in fashion contexts that were concurrent with Dicke's public presentation of *Overview*, it is possible that Dicke's audiences would recognise Moss as the model being featured despite her distortion. This recognition would establish connections between Dicke's work and her viewers' associations with Moss, similar to the interest Freud's portrait received because of Moss's cross-cultural fame.

In accordance with *Me – I Forgot the Wire Cutters – Getting the Wire Cutters from the Car to Break into Stonehenge, 1982* (figure 46), Dicke's *Overview* amplifies the narrative's ambiguity in her original image in order to establish an ominous atmosphere. Kilimnik disrupts the undisclosed narrative of Testnio's original image by enhancing Moss's slouch, amplifying the original image's red and black colouration and compositing a title with references to weapons (wire cutters) and crime (break in). Dicke made her cut-out's sinister connotations more explicit through traceable references to horror cinema's visual tropes. Through *Overview* (figure 51), as an example of the visual themes she repeats throughout her cut-out series, Dicke re-envisioned fashion models as the folkloric figures of succubae or 'spirit lovers', the female demons who seduce sleeping men.<sup>521</sup> By drawing an analogy between her source material and succubae – mythological figures described from medieval literature as corrupting and alluring – Dicke expresses her simultaneous feelings of attraction and scepticism for the pop culture figures, stimulating her fan feelings.<sup>522</sup> Dicke's creatures also can be interpreted to be zombies. In post-millennium scholarly discourse and popular culture, zombies represent criticisms of consumerism and post-

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<sup>521</sup> S. Gooch, *The: Poltergeists, Incubi, Succubi, and the Unconscious Mind*, (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1984), 1; A.J. Smith, 'Ambiguity as Poetic Shift', *Critical Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (1962), 69; J. Ankerberg and J. Weldon, 'Sexual Immorality and Other Consequences of Occult Involvement–Part 2' (Ankerberg Theological Research Institute, 2003), at [http://www.jashow.org/wiki/index.php/Sexual\\_Immorality\\_and\\_Other\\_Personal\\_and\\_Social\\_Consequences\\_of\\_Occult\\_Involvement](http://www.jashow.org/wiki/index.php/Sexual_Immorality_and_Other_Personal_and_Social_Consequences_of_Occult_Involvement).

<sup>522</sup> C.D. Laughlin, 'Máandalas, Nixies, Goddesses, and Succubi', *International Journal* 20 (2001), 33–52; N. Kiessling, 'Doctor Faustus and the Sin of Demoniality', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* (1975), 205–211.

modern bio-politics.<sup>523</sup> Dicke's transformation of her celebrity subjects into succubae and zombies represents tensions in fandom between passive consumption of mass market material and fans' desire to become active consumers. As a collage artist, Dicke's form of appropriation demonstrates Fiske's analogy of fans as being akin to consumers who customise blue jeans rather than wear them as bought.<sup>524</sup> Fiske argues that fans, like wearers who alter their garments, are 'secondary producers'. They creatively engage with their consumer consumption by altering pre-existing products, thereby contradicting assumptions that consumerism turns individuals into 'cultural dupes'.<sup>525</sup> Dicke's artistic practice presents a similar relationship with popular culture. Her work fits within a tradition that is not destructive but aims to alter, to customise and to adapt cultural products to claim better ownership and intimacy with them. Instead of being a fan who purchases a commercial item to emulate an admired celebrity icon, Dicke removes models from their commercial context to create self-portraits in order to represent her own identity. Despite the evidence that Dicke's art expresses the same contradictions and tensions found in Kilimnik's work, Dicke is not critically perceived as expressing a 'stalker sensibility'. Her work is, instead, interpreted as being uncomplicated criticism of her source material. Her fandom is questioned or overlooked by critics, whereas Kilimnik's fandom assumes and her fan identity threatens her artistic credibility and personal mental health for her detractors.

### **Kilimnik's Portraits of Kate Moss Contrasted with Marc Quinn's Sculpture Series of Moss**

If, as we have suggested, Dicke's apparently aggressive artworks symbolically represent her fandom, then an inverse set of contradictions exists in the superficially adoring artworks by Marc Quinn (b. London 1964–). Critics have not identified

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<sup>523</sup> E. Colless, 'Iconicity: the Medium of Miraculous Images', *New Imaging: Transdisciplinary Strategies for Art Beyond the New Media*: Conference Paper, 52, accessed 25 October 2014 at <http://blogs.unsw.edu.au/tiic/files/2011/04/TIICproceedings.pdf>; S. Harper, 'Zombies, Malls, and the Consumerism Debate: George Romero's Dawn of the Dead', *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture* 1, no. 2 (2002), accessed 12 September 2014 at [www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall\\_2002/harper.htm?pagewanted=all](http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall_2002/harper.htm?pagewanted=all); J. Round, 'Zombies, Absence and Existentialism: "We Are the Walking Dead!"' in Wayne Yuen (ed.), *The Walking Dead and Philosophy* (Chicago: Open Court In Press, 2011), 155–167.

<sup>524</sup> J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 10–11.

<sup>525</sup> J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 6.

Quinn's sculptures as pathological, although in this section it will be argued that they demonstrate elements of the 'stalker sensibility' that critics find troubling in Kilimnik's work. In this section, his choice of medium, sophisticated aesthetic, conceptual statements about his work and personal biography will be presented as explanations for discrepancies in the critical responses to their work.<sup>526</sup> Principally, Quinn's work does not demonstrate the identification that defines the fandom found in McGinley's, Peyton's and Kilimnik's works, and his fandom is not expressed in the identification that theorists like Thompson and Elliot have pinpointed as being essential to fandom.<sup>527</sup> His work, however, exemplifies fans' objectification and idolatry of celebrities. His work has been selected for comparison with Kilimnik's work because Quinn's depictions of Moss express more extreme forms of deification and objectification than hers, yet his work has not been critically perceived as pathological. Therefore, this thesis argues that aesthetics conveying emotional investment in celebrities and celebrity identification are perceived as pathological by critics more often than more emotionally reserved visual expressions of fandom. In other words, the presentation of fandom is problematic for critics, when fan expression complies with cultural expectations that fans are emotionally overwrought and outsiders. In this context, Quinn's use of materials and his choice of colours determine the nature of how fandom is interpreted in his work about Moss.

Quinn depicted Moss in three distinct series. First he produced *Beauty*, a single, life-sized ice-sculpture of Moss (figure 54) in 2002. He then created an extensive series of sculptures, collectively identified as his *Sphinx* series, from 2006 to 2007, and finally, *Siren*, a smaller, related series was made in 2008. As with Dicke's *Scandeleuse*, *Sphinx* and *Siren* were created and exhibited during turbulent periods in Moss's professional and public life. During these periods, as will be shown, her relevance as a public symbol transitioned, and these changes influenced the perceived content of Quinn's artworks. Nonetheless, Quinn's work consistently illustrates his subjective adoration of Moss and his presumption that his audience shares his view of Moss as 'a

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<sup>526</sup> S. Kent, *Shark Infested Waters: the Saatchi Collection of British Art in the 90s* (London: Zwemmer, 1994), 73–76.

<sup>527</sup> J. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: a Social Theory of the Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 220–225.

knotted Venus of our age'.<sup>528</sup> Quinn's public statements articulate his fannish enthusiasm for Moss while employing scholarly vocabulary in historical and multi-cultural references and theories about the sociology of celebrity. Unlike Peyton and Kilimnik, Quinn provided the press with quotes such as, '[Moss is] a cultural hallucination we have all agreed to create. She is the only person who has the ubiquity and silence that is required in an image of divinity... Venus of our age'.<sup>529</sup> These statements blanket his subjective emotional investment in Moss with cultural critique and intellectual commentary.

*Beauty* was a cast of Moss's head made entirely of ice and displayed in a refrigerated vitrine designed for it to gradually melt over a three-month period. Its ephemeral existence lasted the duration of Quinn's 2002 solo exhibition at the Hatton Gallery.<sup>530</sup> Prior to making *Beauty*, Quinn produced three sculptures for his series, *Self* (1991–). *Self* is an on-going series consisting of casts of Quinn's head made in five-year intervals from 4.5 litres of his own blood. He conceived this series to chart his aging process while using and preserving his biological material.<sup>531</sup> The conceit of *Self* is that the series resembles traditional death masks but consists only of Quinn's vital fluid.<sup>532</sup> Responding to this irony, Stallabrass described *Self* as blurring the boundaries between an artist's absence and his or her presence in an artwork.<sup>533</sup> In addition to *Self*, in the same year as he created *Beauty*, Quinn created *Lucas*, a cast of his three-day-old infant son from a mixture of the baby's own liquidised placenta and

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<sup>528</sup> D. Persis Murray, 'Kate Moss, Icon of Postfeminist Disorder', *Celebrity Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013), 14–32.

<sup>529</sup> J. Wainwright, 'Marc Quinn on Self, Sphinx and Saatchi', *The Art Newspaper* (December 17, 2009), 34.

<sup>530</sup> Exhibition details: Marc Quinn (solo), 'Behind the Mask Portraits', *Hatton Gallery*, Newcastle (16 March 2002 – 25 May 2002).

<sup>531</sup> P. Frank, 'Marc Quinn Discusses Self-Portraits Made from His Own Blood', *Huffington Post* (6 August 2012), accessed 23 May 2014 at [www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/08/marc-quinn\\_n\\_1581132.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/08/marc-quinn_n_1581132.html).

<sup>532</sup> R. Kaulingfreks and R. Ten Bos 'On Faces and Defacement: the Case of Kate Moss', *Business Ethics: a European Review* 16, no. 3 (2007), 302–312; H. Shugart, C. Egley Waggoner and D. Lynn O'Brien Hallstein, 'Mediating Third-Wave Feminism: Appropriation as Postmodern Media Practice', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18, no. 2 (2001), p. 201; M.M. Lelwica, *Starving for Salvation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 52.

<sup>533</sup> J. Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: British Art in the 1990s* (London: Verso, 1999), 157.

umbilical cord.<sup>534</sup> If *Beauty* is interpreted as a related work to *Self* and *Lucas*, then Quinn can be seen as arguing that Moss's essence is something other than human.

*Beauty* was produced from a universally accessible, anonymous material, unlike DNA. Quinn has not publically disclosed the source for the water that he used to manufacture *Beauty*. The ice could consist of luxury marketed, bottled water, representing Moss's high-fashion status. Or it could be English tap water, referencing her working-class background and her cultural ubiquity. The water could have hidden personal relevance for Moss or for Quinn, but none of these signifiers are included in the publically accessible material accompanying the work. Regardless of the water's origins, the material is, significantly, not native to Moss's body. Although Moss participated in the production of *Beauty* by sitting for the casting process, the sculpture is not a portrait of her in the same sense that Freud's portrait represents her personal identity. Instead, *Beauty* is a representation of her image and function for her fans. In this way, Quinn's work resembles Warhol's idealised portraits of celebrities' public images. Quinn confirmed that he does not create portraits of Moss but illustrates '[her] image and the way that image is sculpted and twisted by our collective desire' in *Beauty* and in his subsequent series.<sup>535</sup> Quinn's public commentary about *Beauty* supports this interpretation. He described the sculpture as 'a perfect metaphor for our consumption of [Moss's] beauty – as the ice evaporates, it will be released as vapor into the art gallery, and people will breathe [Moss] in... There is something so Eucharistic about it'.<sup>536</sup> In this statement, Quinn declared his fan affinity for Moss. His equation of Moss with Jesus Christ correlates with the religious analogies between fandom and worship theoretically addressed in Chapter One (Page 44) and expressed in McGinley's images of Morrissey and in Dicke's depiction of Moss's crucifixion. This analysis also portrays Moss as a martyr, similar to Kilimnik's interpretation in *Kate Moss with Sparkles* (figure 40).

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<sup>534</sup> M. Marianne, 'Mummification: the Subject of the Placenta in Marc Quinn's "Lucas"', *Women: A Cultural Review* 17, no. 3 (2006); M. Gayford, 'What a Bloody Mess', *The Telegraph* (13 February 2002), accessed 22 May 2014 at [www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3573090/What-a-bloody-mess.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3573090/What-a-bloody-mess.html) (accessed 22 May 2014).

<sup>535</sup> C. Higgins, 'Meet Kate Moss – Contorted', *The Guardian* (12 April 2006), accessed 18 March 2014 at [www.guardian.co.uk/music/2006/apr/12/2](http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2006/apr/12/2).

<sup>536</sup> A. Tahler, 'Kate Moss to Rise as Bronze Aphrodite', *The Times* (5 February 2006), accessed 8 November 2014 at [thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk\\_news/article204123.ece](http://thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/article204123.ece).

Quinn elaborated on his deification of Moss in *Sphinx*, particularly in *Siren*. The *Sphinx* series, in contrast to the ephemerality of *Beauty*, is a series of casts of Moss's serene face and a contortionist's body in gold and bronze (figures 56 and 55). Her face is identical in every sculpture, but in each individual work the body is posed in different advanced yoga poses. The central work in this series, from 2008, is titled *Siren*. It was made from 18-carat gold and is reported to weigh 110 lbs, which is Moss's body weight.<sup>537</sup> Other works in the series have different weights and measurements, such as the painted bronze sculpture installed outdoors at Derbyshire's Chatsworth House in 2006, which measures 10 feet tall. The different scales represent Moss's body and Quinn's perception of her celebrity status. In accordance with this theme that Moss is a contemporary figure of worship, works in *Sphinx* are titled with sub-designations, naming different goddesses from Greek, Roman, Hindu and Buddhist mythologies.<sup>538</sup>

Media scholar Dara Persis Murray has deconstructed the interplay between Eastern and Western references in Quinn's series to show their representation of conflicting cultural connotations ascribed to Moss's body, saying: 'Moss offers meanings of female beauty and sexuality that play with notions of indulgence and discipline, and the blurred interconnections between the two underlie her aesthetic and celebrity status'.<sup>539</sup> Quinn's 2007 *Sphinx (Road to Enlightenment)* (figure 57) supports Persis Murray's interpretation through its grotesque exaggeration of Moss's physique. In *Sphinx (Road to Enlightenment)*, Moss's face appears on a skeletal form in a lotus meditation posture. Casts of Moss's hands hover against a concave stomach. Her body is reduced to the lines of an exoskeleton matching the striped drapery hanging from her raised arms. In the context of Quinn's religious references, the skeletal proportions of this body are an allusion to Gandhara-style representations of the *Fasting Buddha*, not a macabre mockery of Moss's thinness. However, Persis Murray questions Quinn's 'association between Moss and Siddhartha, an Indian prince who meditated under the Bodhi tree until he received enlightenment concerning the

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<sup>537</sup> 'British Museum Unveils Solid Gold Moss', *Artinfo.com* (28 August 2008), accessed 21 April 2014 at [www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/28418/british-museum-unveils-solid-gold-moss/](http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/28418/british-museum-unveils-solid-gold-moss/).

<sup>538</sup> D. Persis Murray, 'Kate Moss, Icon', 14–32.

<sup>539</sup> D. Persis Murray, 'Kate Moss, Icon', 14.

meaning of human suffering'.<sup>540</sup> Persis Murray found no justification for Quinn's repeated portrayal of Moss as a martyr but convincingly identified his idealisation of Moss as the expression of his admiration and not as the objective commentary that he articulates in interviews.

With the exception of Persis Murray's journal article, little analytic attention has been paid to the content of Quinn's sculptures of Moss. Press attention instead celebrified the series through images of the sculptures with descriptive text and Quinn's quotes, but not through critical analysis. Critics have not explored concerns about Quinn's form of fandom because he presented his sculptures as objective commentaries, not as expressions of his fan attachment to the celebrity subject. Identification, as an essential element in fandom, is evident in connections between *Beauty* and his other self-portraits. Although his deification of Moss is consistent with fans' imaginative conception of celebrities, *Sphinx* and *Siren* are presented as representations of Moss's media persona, and not of Quinn's fan identity.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it was contended that Kilimnik's art has been interpreted derisively because her explicit expressions of fans' identification with celebrities are misperceived as being pathological. Although evidence in her art supports criticism that her style replicates adolescent expression, this aesthetic is not necessarily a sign of pathology. This chapter argues instead that critics find fandom itself disturbing and her art's representation of fandom is the cause for critics' disparagement.

An analysis of art by Stella Vine, whose outsider biography and signs of aggression are more extreme than Kilimnik's, will expand on these themes and concerns in the following and final chapter of this thesis.

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<sup>540</sup> D. Persis Murray, 'Kate Moss, Icon', 8.

## CHAPTER V

### *Broken Dolls: Stella Vine's Macabre Paintings of Celebrities*

## INTRODUCTION

Paintings by Stella Vine (b. Alnwick, 1969–) explicitly demonstrate the tensions between fans' adoration and aggression, empathy and objectification of celebrities which previous chapters argued were discernable in art by McGinley, Peyton and Kilimnik. As with these other artists, Vine's work has been critically regarded as representing fandom and she herself has been subject to personal criticism in the popular press because her art is regarded as expressing fannish fantasies. Although Vine has not achieved the long-running commercial success or broad support from established art institutions that McGinley, Peyton and Kilimnik enjoy, her work and biography garnered broad media attention in the British press between 2003 and 2007. During this time of limited success, her work was strongly derided in the mass media and used to illustrate arguments belittling fandom.

This thesis acknowledges that Vine's art lacks the technical sophistication of work by the other artists discussed. The compelling aspects of the work are its illustrations of the fundamental tensions in fandom, which are elements evident in Vine's paintings finished between 2003 and 2007. These paintings present dynamic narratives about celebrities with blood and melted skin. In later work, Vine presents celebrities without such macabre details; however, the majority of these works are flaccid and powerless, and her portraits of celebrities without signs of rupture and violence lack the complexity and appeal of Peyton's and Kilimnik's paintings, or McGinley's similarly adoring presentation of his fan fixation on Morrissey. Therefore only the early works that include images of blood and signs of distress will be analysed in this chapter. However, this thesis does not advocate Vine's work as the best representative of these elements – only that which is most publically discussed.

Decisions about quality are ultimately subjective matters of taste when judging contemporary art. Yet Vine's relatively limited professional success indicates that her work has had a narrow audience within the established art community, while McGinley, Peyton and Kilimnik, although they attract criticism, also receive gallery exhibitions, museum exhibitions, awards, monographs, significant sales and other accolades. In contrast, Vine garnered momentary attention but her fame was marginalised to outsider art status. Press coverage of her art has focused on her personal history, and critics' reactions to her canvases, as will be seen later in this

chapter, tend to focus on her content, not her methods. Her pictorial shortcomings, however, do not undermine the relevance of her work to the issues discussed in this thesis, although they draw into question the nature of attention she has received.

The qualities that constitute fandom – celebrity identification, use of media consumption to express identity, and paradoxical combination of adoration and aggression towards celebrities – define the nature of McGinley’s, Peyton’s and Kilimnik’s art about celebrities. Previous chapters have shown that critics who overlook fandom’s complexities and discount fandom as a valid, compelling and broad subject for art dismiss their work. The other artists presented as counterpoints to their work share elements with these core artists but do not represent all three core qualities in their work. They also do not embody the same stereotypes as the central artists – whose education and biographies represent unsubstantiated stereotypes of fans. A unifying theme in the previous chapters is therefore that the depth of fandom as expressed by McGinley’s, Peyton’s and Kilimnik’s art has been overlooked.

This chapter, however, makes a different argument. Instead of asserting that Vine’s art has not received appropriate attention, this chapter argues that her art and her public identity attracted media attention only because it confirms prevailing stereotypes about fans. Vine made the transition from fan to ‘celetoid’ when she began attracting public attention. In this context, her work was used to illustrate pre-existing assumptions about fans and ‘celetoids’, and it was misinterpreted for rhetorical purposes by the British press.<sup>541</sup> Richard Hamilton (Pimlico, England 1922–London, 2011), Douglas Gordon (b. Glasgow, 1966–) and Dawn Mellor (b. Manchester, 1970–); the three artists selected as counter-points to Vine’s work, also express the violent and dramatic elements in her art that enticed media attention, but their art, as will be seen, is aesthetically and conceptually more sophisticated – and they have earned serious institutional and commercial attention. This thesis argues that these artists’ combination of appropriated celebrity imagery and violent fantasies is accepted in the established art world and overlooked by tabloid press because they do not publically declare themselves as fans, which Vine does, and their polished self-presentation contradicts perceptions about fans.

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<sup>541</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 20.

In order to present Vine's work in context, the chapter will first provide a brief biography of Vine and present representative examples of her paintings, focusing on two of her seminal subjects: Kate Moss and Diana Spencer, Princess of Wales (Sandringham, 1961–1997). These sections will be followed by an overview of critical reactions to Vine's work and the three case studies contrasting her art. It will be shown that Hamilton's 1966 *My Marilyn* (figures 64 and 65) and Gordon's series of burnt appropriated photographs mounted on mirrors collectively titled *Self-Portrait of You + Me* (figures 66 & 68) exhibit greater violence towards celebrity subjects than Vine's paintings of celebrities with blood or melted make-up. Like Vine's work, Hamilton's appropriation demonstrated his empathy for his subject and Gordon's appropriation illustrates fans' identification with celebrities. In a related form, Mellor's continuous depiction of celebrities as grotesques and zombies in her oil paintings greatly exceeds Vine's similarly themed portraits. This chapter presents these contrasts as a final demonstration of the central argument that fandom – with its inherent paradoxes between adoration and aggression, celebrity identification and adherence to certain limiting cultural stereotypes – is stigmatised by critics, whereas elements of fandom, such as deification and aggression, are accepted when presented separately and packaged as intellectual critique rather than emotional expressions of fan attachments. These sections will be followed by an overview of critical reactions to Vine's work and the three case studies contrasting her art.

The forthcoming passages document how fandom functions in Vine's art and how her public statements embody cultural conceptions of fandom. These passages will investigate relationships between Vine's work and the research questions for this thesis which asks: 2) What scholarly recognized elements of fandom do the main four artists display in their work? How do the artists reject or embody prevalent cultural stereotypes (particularly pertaining to gender, class and mental health) concerning fans in creating their art?

## **I. STELLA VINE: CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS**

### **Vine's Biographical Background**

Melissa Jane Robson was born in 1969 in Alnwick, Northumberland, England. According to her, her early life experiences influence her artwork. She had a turbulent

upbringing in foster care and suffered from sexual abuse. She gave birth to a son in 1986 and, as reported in the English mainstream media, she supported him and herself through menial jobs and dancing in strip clubs.<sup>542</sup> She ran an amateur theatre company, formed a punk band and attended London's Academy of Live and Recorded Arts but left before completing her course.<sup>543</sup> In 1995, Robson gave herself the pseudonym 'Stella Vine' and she only produces art under this name.<sup>544</sup> Whereas Dorment described Kilimnik as 'one step away from being an outsider artist',<sup>545</sup> Vine's background is even further from established art community conventions. The term 'outsider artist' is preliminarily identified as an artist who is 'untrained' in an art school environment.<sup>546</sup> Although Vine did not attend a university level art school, she attended classes at London's open-entry, non-degree accredited Hampstead School of Art in 1999–2001.<sup>547</sup> Following this introduction to art making, Vine became personally and creatively involved with London's contentious Stuckist group of outsider artists. To promote the work of these artists, in 2003 Vine opened an independent artist-run project space in London. As the director of the gallery, Vine made amateur art expressing fandom and art criticising the mainstream art community her curatorial focus.<sup>548</sup>

Since 2003, Vine has been exhibiting large-scale acrylic paintings of celebrities with child-like features set against single-coloured backgrounds. Vine constructs her

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<sup>542</sup> W. Januszczak, 'The Paint Stripper', *The Sunday Times* (10 June 2007), accessed 10 October 2014 at [waldemar.tv/2007/06/the-paint-stripper/](http://waldemar.tv/2007/06/the-paint-stripper/).

<sup>543</sup> See: J. Wullschlager, 'Where Art History Meets Hello!' *Financial Times* (21 July 2007); W. Januszczak, 'The Paint Stripper'. S. Vine, 'My Life in Glorious Technicolour', *The Guardian* (27 February 2007).

<sup>544</sup> Stella Vine in telephone interview on 2 September 2007.

<sup>545</sup> R. Dorment, 'Heritage for Barbie Girls', *The Telegraph* (27 March 2007), accessed 19 May 2014 at [www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3664066/Heritage-for-Barbie-girls.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3664066/Heritage-for-Barbie-girls.html).

<sup>546</sup> A. Esman, 'Art and Psychopathology: the Message of Outsider Art', *American Journal of Art Therapy* 27, no. 1 (1988), 13.

<sup>547</sup> Hampstead School of Art is a non-degree facility offering beginners and hobbyists studio time and trained experience with tools, live models and certified coaches. The school's mission, as stated on the website, is 'unleashing the artist in everyone'. Information is found at: [www.art-school-hampstead.co.uk](http://www.art-school-hampstead.co.uk).

<sup>548</sup> K. Leong, 'Gallery Review by Karen Leong, Fanclub, Curated by Cathy Lomax', *City & Islington News* (December 2003), accessed 10 October 2014 at [www.rosywilde.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.rosywilde.blogspot.co.uk).

paintings as expressions of her fan affinities for contemporary British and North American mass media celebrities whose public identities include scandals and public shaming. Alongside these celebrities, Vine paints fantasy figures such as Superman, figures from recent art history such as Frida Kahlo and self-referential narratives depicting her mother and the strip club where she worked. The British celebrity subjects that Vine selects are often the focus of media attention at the times when she paints them. Although her earliest paintings' surface texture was rough, in her advanced work, she creates flat and glossy surfaces with her paint application, with the surface texture of her paintings after 2004 evoking the appearance of magazine pages. Her presentation of her subjects resembles Kilimnik's signature style, although Vine's depictions are more abstract since her subjects' physical proportions are further from reality than Kilimnik's. Vine depicts her subjects' heads as disproportionately large and their facial features, like Kilimnik's subjects' features, are distorted to doll-like proportions. When she includes her subjects' limbs in images, they appear stringy and boneless. Many of her paintings from 2003–2005, such as her portraits of Princess Diana and Moss, are overtly macabre, with images of blood and melting skin complicating her content.

In 2003, Vine became the subject of mainstream media attention when the influential art collector Charles Saatchi purchased her portrait of a bleeding Diana, Princess of Wales, *Hi Paul can you come over?* for £600 (figure 58).<sup>549</sup> The oil painting depicted Diana calling to her butler, whom the British press reported was her lover, with the phrase 'Hi Paul, can you come over I am really frightened'.<sup>550</sup> Saatchi exhibited *Hi Paul can you come over?* in 'New Blood', his 2004 showcase of unknown artists. The exhibition also included a portrait by Vine of Rachel Whitear (figure 59), a British teenager whose heroin overdose was widely publicised in the British news media. Vine's portrait replicated Whitear's high school class photo, but Vine added red slashes of paint from her mouth. Of all the work in the exhibition, Vine's paintings attracted the most media controversy. Her sensational biography, the context of

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<sup>549</sup> C. Wu, 'YBA Saatchi? – from Shark Sensation to Pastoral Painting', in Petersen, A.R., Bogh, M., Christensen, H.D. and Larsen, P.N., eds., *Contemporary Painting in Context* (2010), 213.

<sup>550</sup> R. Coward, 'What the Butler Started: Relations between British Tabloids and Monarchy in the Fall-Out from the Paul Burrell Trial', *Journalism Practice* 1, no. 2 (2007), pp. 245–260.

Saatchi's acquisition of the painting and the painting's content were aggressively discussed in national newspapers and the art press.<sup>551</sup> Since then, Vine has continued to attract media attention. In 2007, she was the subject of a solo exhibition at Modern Art Oxford. She had a second solo exhibition at a mid-range independent gallery in London in 2013.<sup>552</sup> These two exhibitions are the highlights of her career to date. In 2008, a tabloid magazine reported that the singer George Michael had purchased Vine's portrait, *Princess Diana, Murdered, Pregnant and Embalmed* (figure 60) for £25,000.<sup>553</sup> This is the recorded sale record for Vine's art; however, inquiries made in 2014 with Vine's personal assistant reveal that her paintings' sales price averages at £3,000.<sup>554</sup>

### **Vine's Signature Artistic Style**

Instead of creating physically exact portraits, Vine's subjects are identifiable from their garments, personal styling and the text that she, like Kilimnik, includes alongside her figures. Unlike the work of a caricaturist who exaggerates distinctive features, Vine, like Peyton, softens her subjects' faces. Although aspects of Vine's subjects' facial features, such as Moss's scraggly teeth (figure 62), are evident in her portraits, the salient effect when viewing her portraits is their homogeneity. The uniformity of her subjects' faces creates the impression that she replicates the same fundamental facial structure for all her portraits, but alters their hairstyles, clothes and poses to disclose her subject's identity.

Their consistently round faces, patches of isolated pink blush and their circular expressionless eyes unify Vine's subjects. The fundamental structure and colouring of these faces replicate bisque or porcelain dolls' heads. Like Kilimnik, she paints her subjects' eyes with distinctly drawn lashes. She also represents their pupils as disproportionately large and surrounded by solid coloured irises. Regardless of the

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<sup>551</sup> L. Leitch, 'Saatchi Draws Blood with Savage Attack on His Critics; Gallery Owner Breaks His Silence "I Am Being Cast as the Pantomime Villain"', *The Evening Standard* (26 April 2004), accessed at 7 November 2014 at <http://business.highbeam.com/5729/article-1G1-115890940/saatchi-draws-blood-savage-attack-his-critics-gallery>.

<sup>552</sup> Stella Vine's calendar, accessed 10 October 2014 at [www.stellavine.com/shows/](http://www.stellavine.com/shows/).

<sup>553</sup> C. Iggulden, 'George's Sick Di Portrait', *The Sun* (30 August 2008), accessed 13 October 2014 at [www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article111650.ece](http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article111650.ece).

<sup>554</sup> Personal telephone interview with L. Baker (Stella Vine's assistant) (16 October 2014).

subject's authentic eye colour, in Vine's portraits they have light blue or periwinkle irises. The doll-like structure of Vine's painted faces recalls Roland Barthes's description of Greta Garbo's face in his 1957 essay 'The Face of Garbo'.<sup>555</sup> Barthes writes about Garbo's projected features as 'an admirable face-object'. Similarly, Germaine Greer describes Vine's universalised face as 'the painted face, the mask behind which celebrity females take cover even as they flaunt themselves'.<sup>556</sup> These elements are apparent in contrasts between Vine's subjects' appearances – with their stiff postures, allusion to cosmetics and references to published photographs – and signs of rupture represented by blood and melted make-up, as well as words which Vine includes alongside her figures in many of her paintings.

Vine's aesthetic and her subject matter were influenced by her formative involvement with the British-based Stuckists group of activist outsider artists. The Stuckists are a community of dissent formed against what they perceive as the established art world's preference for conceptual art. Satirical criticism of contemporary art world conventions and personalities is a reoccurring theme among the Stuckists' core membership.<sup>557</sup> Their manifesto explains that their shared aesthetic combines components of Naïve art and Surrealism with highly personal subject.<sup>558</sup> It states:

It is the Stuckist's duty to explore his/her neurosis and innocence through the making of paintings and displaying them in public, thereby enriching society by giving shared form to individual experience and an individual form to shared experience...<sup>559</sup>

This premise informs Vine's conceptual focus. Vine became engaged with the Stuckists when she was briefly married to the group's co-founder, Charles Thomas. Her involvement with the group dissolved after the couple's separation and her wider

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<sup>555</sup> R. Barthes, 'The Face of Garbo', in R. Barthes (ed.), *Mythologies: the Complete Edition, in a New Translation* (London: Hill and Wang, 2012), 74.

<sup>556</sup> G. Greer, *Stella Vine: Mirror, Mirror* (Oxford: Modern Art Oxford, 2007), 10.

<sup>557</sup> J. Morris, 'Getting Stuck In', *The Guardian* (24 August 2006), accessed 11 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/aug/24/art](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/aug/24/art).

<sup>558</sup> The comprehensive catalogue of Stuckist work can be viewed at [www.stuckist.com](http://www.stuckist.com).

<sup>559</sup> Stuckist manifesto, accessed 11 October 2014 at [www.stuckism.com/stuckistmanifesto.html](http://www.stuckism.com/stuckistmanifesto.html).

fame exceeded the group's notoriety.<sup>560</sup> Following her initial success, Vine became the subject of mocking paintings by members of the core Stuckist group.<sup>561</sup> These mockeries lambast Vine and replicate her signature stylistic motifs, such as her colours and cartoonish methods. They also reproduce her best-known works, which are introduced in the next section, since these works which the Stuckists mock in the same way that celebrities are mocked by detractors are her most complex representations of her fan identity.

### **Representative Artworks by Vine**

*Hi Paul can you come over?* (figure 58) is the most extreme example of themes and motifs that Vine replicates throughout her career. In this painting, which established her artistic reputation, she envisioned Princess Diana as a zombie. Vine depicts Diana wearing a tiara and formal gown but her skin is blotchy, her eyes bulge and blood dribbles from her mouth. The painting's title is written in thick, cramped, red letters alongside Diane's ghoulish face. Unlike her later work produced in acrylic, *Hi Paul can you come over?* is a densely applied oil painting on board, and this medium accounts for its muddy mesh of colour.

Since producing this debut work, Vine evolved a smoother and tidier method of paint application, seen in her more mature images of Diana, created from 2003 onwards. For example, she painted *Murdered, Pregnant and Embalmed* (figure 60) in 2005. The 5ft x 6ft portrait juxtaposes an image of the Princess, elegant and poised, with the words of the title written behind her. The title references conspiracy theories about Diana's death and the white letters, outlined with pink, set against a royal blue background, have the effect of neon marquee lights.<sup>562</sup> In the image's foreground, Diana is presented wearing a blue evening gown that is identifiable from a well-publicised photograph of her at official state events, although her pose and expression

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<sup>560</sup> A. O'Keeffe, 'How Ageing Art Punks Got Stuck into Tate's Serota', *The Observer* (11 December 2005), accessed 11 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/dec/11/arts.artsnews1](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/dec/11/arts.artsnews1).

<sup>561</sup> Stuckist website, accessed 10 October 2014 at [www.stuckism.com/MarkD/index.html](http://www.stuckism.com/MarkD/index.html).

<sup>562</sup> K.M. Douglas and R.M. Sutton, 'The Hidden Impact of Conspiracy Theories: Perceived and Actual Influence of Theories Surrounding the Death of Princess Diana', *The Journal of Social Psychology* 148, no. 2 (2008), 210–222; M. Wood, J. Karen, M. Douglas and R. Sutton, 'Dead and Alive Beliefs in Contradictory Conspiracy Theories', *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 3, no. 6 (2012), 767–773.

in Vine's painting are amalgamations taken from different photographs in other contexts.<sup>563</sup> In Vine's painting, Diana's hand is extended towards the viewer although her eyes are directed downwards. Her posture appears as if she were on a formal receiving line mechanically shaking hands with an orderly line of recipients. This presentation confirms her ambivalence about fans' influence on celebrities as addressed in a future section of this chapter.

Vine replicates the central motifs in her portraits of Diana when she paints Moss. Like Kilimnik, Vine repeatedly paints Moss. Her twin paintings of Moss, titled *I Only Make Love to Jesus* (figure 61) and *Holy water cannot help you now*, (figure 62) were painted in 2006, concurrent with Moss's period of public shaming. Vine directly engaged Moss's scandals through her use of drips, text and signs of disarray. Prior to producing these two paintings, Vine literally replicated Moss's pose and appearance in a tabloid photograph of the model misusing illegal drugs.<sup>564</sup> Her two later paintings did not directly illustrate the factual events in Moss's scandal but fictionally imagined her private response and emotional reaction being publically shamed. *I Only Make Love to Jesus* depicts Moss with greater exactitude than is typical in Vine's portraits. Vine realistically presents Moss's irregular teeth and wandering left eye, although she also idealises the model's proportions by elongating her neck. This contradictory perspective of Moss is consistent with her appeal for fans. As film critic Paul Matwychuk observes, 'Kate Moss has become so synonymous with the notion of "unattainable beauty" that it's easy to forget what an anomaly she was, what a collection of flaws, when she burst onto the fashion world'.<sup>565</sup> Vine's depiction speaks directly to this dichotomy, which is central to Moss's specific appeal for her fans. Alongside Moss's face, Vine writes the title of the painting in dripping cursive. Although Vine frames her lettering with quotation marks, Moss was never quoted as saying 'I only make love to Jesus'. This fictional quote was invented by Vine and not

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<sup>563</sup> The dress can be seen at: E. Tumposky and S. Silverman, 'Butler's Show Tells All About Princess D.', *People* (21 June 2004), accessed 14 October 2014 at [www.people.com/people/article/0,,655508,00.html](http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,655508,00.html).

<sup>564</sup> R. Kaulingfreks and R. Ten Bos, 'On Faces and Defacement: the Case of Kate Moss', *Business Ethics: A European Review* 16, no. 3 (2007), 302–312.

<sup>565</sup> P. Matwychuk, 'In Defence of Kate Moss', *Vue Weekly* (5 August 2002), accessed 13 October 2014 at [www.alternet.org/story/13767/in\\_defense\\_of\\_kate\\_moss](http://www.alternet.org/story/13767/in_defense_of_kate_moss).

explained through the painting's internal narrative.<sup>566</sup> Its implications are unclear, but Vine's inclusion of this text demonstrates her works' similarity to fiction, a genre that Sandvoss describes as 'tak[ing] on the symbolic resources of popular culture...and reformulate[ing] them according to their own needs and desires'.<sup>567</sup>

Vine's fictional narrative in *I Only Make Love to Jesus* is a celebration of Moss, but her related painting, *Holy water cannot help you now* exhibits the narrative ambiguities apparent in her portrait of Diana, *Hi Paul can you come over?*. In both paintings, Vine portrays her subjects in apparent distress. Moss in *Holy water cannot help you now* is less recognisable than in *I Only Make Love to Jesus*. She holds a cigarette in her hand while pressing her fingers against her temple.<sup>568</sup> Her expression conveys further panic and her face appears to melt into drips of paint descending past the perimeters of her face. As with Vine's portrait of Diana, the position of the lettering alongside Moss's face in *Holy water cannot help you now* registers as condemnation from outside the image, rather than an imagined quote like the title in Vine's fantasy portrait, *I Only Make Love to Jesus*. By depicting Moss unflatteringly, in contrast to her public composure, *Holy water cannot help you now* relates to a perceived 'defacement' of Moss during her period of public shaming.<sup>569</sup> This work represents Vine's perspective of celebrities as vulnerable to fans' favour or disapproval. Her image of Moss physically disintegrating expresses her perspective that Moss's career as the public 'face' of high-end products was endangered by public disapproval. This view was commonly held in the media during the time when Vine was painting and repeats ambiguities and tensions consistent to her work depicting Diana.<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> Stella Vine in email interview on 8 September 2008.

<sup>567</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 24.

<sup>568</sup> B. Acevedoa, S. Warren and E. Wray-Blissc, 'The Devil in High Heels: Drugs, Symbolism and Kate Moss', *Culture and Organization* 15 (2009), 331–345.

<sup>569</sup> R. Kaulingfreks and R. Ten Bos, 'On Faces and Defacement', 302–312.

<sup>570</sup> B. Acevedoa, S. Warren and E. Wray-Blissc, 'The Devil in High Heels', 335.

Vine ceased including blood and melted make-up in her images after 2009. Like Kilimnik, her style and themes have softened during the last decade. Her palette and methods of depiction have remained consistent but she refrains from graphic signs of celebrities' defacement. Thus drips in her later images are less pronounced and distributed throughout her compositions rather than localised in her subjects' faces, where they signify ruptures in celebrities' public images and statuses. A representative example of Vine's later work is a 2011 portrait of Kate Middleton smiling and waving her hand against a peach background (figure 63). Vine's depiction of Middleton expresses no evidence of distress or tension. The contradictions between fans' adoration and aggression are not portrayed in *Kate M* or related work during this period. Her later work receives nominal press attention, in contrast to initial public interest in her art following the reception for *Hi Paul can you come over?*.

### **Critical Reception to Vine's Artwork and Fandom**

Media interest in Vine crested from 2003–2007 and focused strongly on her biography and her personal presentation. *The Guardian* newspaper published a brief biography of her on its web archives which begins: 'British artist Stella Vine was born in Alnwick, Northumberland, in 1969. She left school at 13, fell pregnant at 16, and was a stripper before becoming an artist'.<sup>571</sup> This biography continues to provide an overview of her professional accomplishments yet the sensational introduction to her public identity reflects media interest in her marginalised aspects of her personal life. A profile in the same newspaper includes the line, 'The best known fact about Stella Vine is that she used to be a stripper but you would never guess it to meet her: she has a soft, pink, sweet, round face that makes you think of milkmaids and mop caps'.<sup>572</sup> An art blogger wrote similarly when starting an article, 'Stella Vine doesn't look like any of the things she's been. She doesn't look like a stripper. She doesn't look like an escort girl. And she certainly doesn't look like one of Britain's most notorious artists'.<sup>573</sup> This attention on Vine's life and appearance presents her as

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<sup>571</sup> Bio of Stella Vine, *The Guardian Unlimited* (date unknown), accessed 21 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/profile/stellavine](http://www.theguardian.com/profile/stellavine).

<sup>572</sup> L. Barber, 'Vine Times', *The Observer* (8 July 2007), accessed 10 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/jul/08/art](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/jul/08/art).

<sup>573</sup> W. Januszczak, 'The Paint Stripper'.

celebrity, whose physicality is part of her persona, and distracts from her work. This direction is maintained in interviews where reporters focus on her biography rather than engage her in dialogue about her artistic techniques and conceptual aspirations. Vine encourages this narrative by drawing analogies between her experiences in the art world and scandalous aspects of her personal biography. For instance, in a 2006 interview, she elaborately described the art world as ‘exactly the same as the sex industry’.<sup>574</sup> Her sense of marginalisation and resentment of the art world and press is a prevailing theme in her interviews. Her response to fame is disparaging.

In contrast to McGinley, Peyton and Kilimnik, Vine cultivates a combative relationship with journalists. Whereas Peyton and, to a greater degree, Kilimnik, are reticent when discussing their artwork with the press, McGinley and Vine participate in press coverage of their art. McGinley has received mostly supportive press and he reciprocates by being engaging with writers. Vine, however, is confrontational with journalists. As a media figure, Vine’s persona is an amplified version of the other core artists’ public identities. Vine’s work reflects her attitudes about embodying an identity that Sue Holmes and Sean Redmond describe as a ‘hybridized fan-celebrity...a mediated figure (however, niche)’<sup>575</sup> because her experiences with fame influence her depictions of more famous figures as victimised by their celebrity status. Her complaints about her minor celebrity status are formed by three factors. Firstly, tabloid reports about her life and art are primarily disparaging and focus on stigmatised aspects of her biography, although critics of Kilimnik and Peyton are equivalently negative. Secondly, her active antagonism towards, yet courting of, media interest reflects the Stuckists’ relationship with the art-press. Like other members of the Stuckists, she uses press opportunities to extrapolate broad statements about social injustice from her personal sense of exclusion.<sup>576</sup> Thirdly, her feelings of media persecution also mimic complaints by mass media celebrities, including those she paints. In this sense, her media posturing is an extension of her identification with her subjects, such as Princess Diana and Moss, whose experiences with media

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<sup>574</sup> D. Smith, ‘Art? It’s Like the Sex Trade’, *The Observer* (23 April 2006), accessed 21 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/apr/23/art3](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/apr/23/art3).

<sup>575</sup> S. Holmes and S. Redmond, *Stardom and Celebrity*, 310.

<sup>576</sup> D. Smith, ‘Art?’

invasiveness are significant elements in their biographies.

The press reciprocates Vine's antagonism. A 2004 BBC report, confirming that media attention on Vine's art has been primarily disparaging, states: 'Charles Saatchi may have seen something he liked in Stella Vine's paintings but many art critics have rejected her outright'.<sup>577</sup> A writer for *The Telegraph* described Vine's paintings in *New Blood* as 'the art equivalent of gutter journalism', a dismissal that represents the heavy-handedness of Vine's depictions which lack the complexity of Peyton and Kilimnik's work.<sup>578</sup> Criticism of Vine's work repeats themes discussed in the literature review for Kilimnik and Peyton; for example, the critic Maev Kennedy characterises her art as 'childlike',<sup>579</sup> and Jackie Wullschlager, writing for the *Financial Times*, began a negative review of Peyton's art by comparing her to Vine and qualifying them as 'similarly arrested adolescent painters'.<sup>580</sup> This analogy between the two artists accurately reflects their shared themes, but Wullschlager's assessment reveals that her dismissal is of their subject matter and adoring affect rather than being a valid comparison of their art, because Peyton and Vine use paint very differently. Thus their methods and skill are not comparable, although their selection of subjects and expression of fandom are allied.

Beyond these critical responses, which connect Vine's work with reactions by critics to art by Peyton and Kilimnik, reporters publically insult Vine's art using aggressive and mocking language. As Akbar summarizes: '[Critics] have written Vine off as a tasteless trickster whose shocking subject matter crosses the line into moral reprehensibility'.<sup>581</sup> Art blogger David Lee, called her a 'brainless rotten painter'.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> 'Alnwick Sensation', *BBC: Inside Out* (27 September 2004), accessed 21 October 2014 at [www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/northeast/series6/stella\\_vine.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/northeast/series6/stella_vine.shtml).

<sup>578</sup> 'First Blood to Saatchi as Star is Born', *The Telegraph* (24 February 2004), accessed 25 October 2014 at [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1455188/First-blood-to-Saatchi-as-a-star-is-born.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1455188/First-blood-to-Saatchi-as-a-star-is-born.html).

<sup>579</sup> M. Kennedy, 'Will These Tragic Celebs Bring Art a New Audience?', *The Guardian* (14 July 2007), accessed 21 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jul/14/artnews.art](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jul/14/artnews.art).

<sup>580</sup> J. Wullschlager, 'Elizabeth Peyton'.

<sup>581</sup> A. Akbar, 'The Many Faces of Stella Vine', *The Independent* (17 July 2007), accessed 11 October 2014 at [www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/9789932.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/9789932.html).

<sup>582</sup> D. Lee, 'Beyond Criticism', *The Jackdaw* (13 August 2007), accessed 11 October 2014 at [www.thejackdaw.co.uk/?p=1187](http://www.thejackdaw.co.uk/?p=1187).

*Hi Paul can you come over?* was nominated as one of the 10 worst paintings in Britain. Critic Andrew Billen described Vine's paint application as 'the artistic equivalent of an unpleasant hamburger: fat and slovenly' in London's *The Times* newspaper.<sup>583</sup> Despite these criticisms of her work, Vine's subject matter and her initial achievements have garnered positive media attention. The nature of this attention is expressed by the title of a 2007 profile of her work prior to her solo exhibition at Modern Art Oxford: 'Will these tragic celebs bring art a new audience?'<sup>584</sup> The writer's response to this question was that: '[Audiences will be] drawn by the controversy which has surrounded the stripper turned artist since instant fame exploded around her'.<sup>585</sup> In this context, Vine functions more as a celebrity, or Rojek's notion of a 'celetoid', than as an artist representing fans' interest in celebrities.<sup>586</sup> Thus Vine's ephemeral celebrity, compounded with audience interest in her subjects, draws attention to her canvases. The next section of this chapter, however, will discuss how her art represents common elements in fandom. This section, in contrast to the premise of this chapter, will present the strengths of her work that warrant serious critical consideration beyond the media attention on her biography. The forthcoming passages document how fandom functions in Vine's art and how her public statements embody cultural conceptions of fandom. These passages will investigate relationships between Vine's work and the interconnected research questions for this thesis which ask: 2) What scholarly recognized elements of fandom do the main four artists display in their work? How do the artists reject or embody prevalent cultural stereotypes (particularly pertaining to gender, class and mental health) concerning fans in creating their art?

## **Vine's Attitude to Fandom and Herself as a Fan**

### ***Identification and Fandom in Vine's Paintings***

Vine's palette is, as one critic describes, 'sugary' and she primarily paints using

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<sup>583</sup> A. Billen, 'I Made More Money as a Stripper', *The Times* (15 June 2004), accessed 12 October 2014 at [www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/life/article1720586.ece](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/life/article1720586.ece).

<sup>584</sup> M. Kennedy, 'Will These Tragic Celebs Bring Art a New Audience?', *The Guardian* (14 July 2007), accessed 21 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jul/14/artnews.art](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jul/14/artnews.art).

<sup>585</sup> M. Kennedy, 'Will These Tragic Celebs'.

<sup>586</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 20.

unmixed acrylic paint on canvas.<sup>587</sup> Acrylic paint's sharp plastic surface, which is visually distinct from oil and watercolour, initially appears to glorify fame and its recipients; however, her medium also represents her subjects' commercial appeal and timeliness, since plastic is a material used to package consumer products. Her repeated use of pale pink, light blue, mint green, lilac and buttery yellow for background colours and her subjects' attire evokes Vine's perspective that fame is superficial and synthetic for her celebrity subjects.

This palette can be contextualised through Rojek's theories about fame and its effects on celebrities. Discordance between Vine's saccharine palette and her depictions of celebrities as wounded or as zombies can be explained through Rojek's theories that fame inherently harms celebrities and causes celebrities to experience psychological rupture. Rojek writes: 'In presenting a public face, *achieved celebrities* often complain of symptoms of psychological disassociation. The public responds to a carefully constructed external face, but the real self is elsewhere and suffers from annihilating feelings of non-recognition and in some cases, invalidation'.<sup>588</sup>

In this context, Vine's use of blood signifies the celebrity's psychological or biographical identity hemorrhaging through a polished, commercially packaged surface. The blood and signs of disarray and distress in her work, such as running or melting make-up, are not imposed by Vine but illustrate her opinion that fame is, as Rojek describes, a destructive force for celebrities.

Despite the evidence presented in Chapter One that contradicts cultural assumptions about fans' antisocial motivations for attachments to celebrities, Vine explains that her emotional investment in parasocial interactions replaces interpersonal relationships for her. She describes herself as 'not a very social person'. According to Vine, her attachments are motivated by:

a sort of desire – a desire for romance, or beauty or glamour, with its flip side of

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<sup>587</sup> L. Davis, 'AnOther Thing That I Wanted To Tell You – Stella Vine on Her Influences and Inner Child', *AnOther Magazine* (8 June 2012), accessed 10 October 2014 at [www.anothermag.com/current/view/1994/Stella\\_Vine\\_on\\_Her\\_Influences\\_and\\_Inner\\_Child](http://www.anothermag.com/current/view/1994/Stella_Vine_on_Her_Influences_and_Inner_Child).

<sup>588</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 611.

being dark, lonely and scared. And it sort of comes from, at its heart, from me being an observer and being a naturally quiet isolated person.<sup>589</sup>

This makes it clear that Vine addresses her idealisation of celebrities and her attempts at empathy with them through her colours and choice of media. These aspects of her art also express her personal perspective in fame, as well as her fan identity. Vine's psychological attachment to celebrities, as expressed in her art, also exemplifies Elliott's description of fans:

... unleash[ing] a range of fantasies and desires and, through projective identification, [that] transfers personal hopes and dreams onto the celebrity. In doing so, the fan actually experiences desired qualities of the self as being contained by the other, the celebrity.<sup>590</sup>

In her art, Vine selects subjects whose personas represent elements in her life story, or her perception of herself. Like McGinley, Peyton and Kilimnik, celebrities serve as amateurs in her images. Her depictions of celebrity subjects are an extended self-portrait representing an idealised version of her personal biography. Vine confers this analysis when describing her emotional attachment to celebrities. She says:

There is a total equality for me between painting a literary figure or Kate Moss or my Mum or a dog or a bird. To me, they are all absolutely equal. They are all projections of things I like, or want, or am afraid of. They are literally parts of me mirrored out.<sup>591</sup>

Vine's use of celebrities as 'mirrors' for herself evolves visually in her artwork since she, like Peyton, alters her subjects' appearance to resemble her own. Critics such as Lynn Barber have noted a resemblance between Vine and her depictions of celebrities. She writes

[Vine] empathiz[es] with her subjects... she says, all her portraits are self-portraits

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<sup>589</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'Stella Vine in Conversation with Ana Finel Honigman', *Saatchi Online*, 12 august 2007. doi: [magazine.saatchionline.com/culture/reports-from/los-angeles-reports-from/stella\\_vine\\_in\\_conversation\\_wi](http://magazine.saatchionline.com/culture/reports-from/los-angeles-reports-from/stella_vine_in_conversation_wi) (accessed: 8 August 2012 – broken citation, original transcript available upon request).

<sup>590</sup> A. Elliott, *The Mourning of John Lennon*, 139.

<sup>591</sup> Personal telephone interview with Stella Vine (13 June 2007).

– she identifies with all these damaged, vulnerable women and commemorates them with all the sweetness she can muster... She has noticed that when she had long blond hair she tended to paint blondes, then when she dyed her hair black she painted brunettes.<sup>592</sup>

In addition to hair colour, Vine makes structural modifications to her subjects' features. As mentioned earlier, Vine distorts her subjects' faces so they appear like traditional porcelain dolls with pale skin, enlarged eyes, rosy patches on their cheeks and rounded faces. These alternations homogenise her subjects and draw an analogy between objectified celebrities and children's transitional objects. However, Vine's method of depicting celebrities also articulates her identification as a fan, since she too has pale skin, naturally blond hair, a round face and delicate features.

Her identification with her celebrity subjects is a frequent topic that she addresses in her interviews. Her stated feelings of empathy and attachment initially appear to contradict the aggressive and violent ways that she depicts her subjects. For example, when responding to a reporter's questions about her decision to posthumously present Rachel Whitear, who was not a celebrity before her death, as bleeding, Vine offered her identification with her subject as her justification. She told newspaper report Arifa Akbar in 2007, 'I'm actually quite similar [to Whitear], an artistic destructive person, very simple... When you see Rachel on the internet — her eyes, I mean I just think they're almost my eyes'.<sup>593</sup> This presumptuous statement, implying a disconnect or disregard for realistic boundaries between media figures and their fans, exemplifies cultural concerns about fandom.

Vine's work also reflects Matt Hill's use of Donald Winnicott's theories of 'transitional or comfort objects', as addressed in Chapter One (2.4). Winnicott's description of children at play 'assuming rights of control and possession over the object which is paradoxically both created and found' applies to adult fans' appropriation of source material into their textual productivity.<sup>594</sup> Kilimnik, in her titles, exemplifies a similar form of appropriation to that of Vine and slash fiction

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<sup>592</sup> L. Barber, 'Vine Times', *The Observer* (8 July 2007), accessed 10 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/jul/08/art](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/jul/08/art).

<sup>593</sup> A. Akbar, 'The Many Faces'.

<sup>594</sup> M. Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 104.

authors. Vine's visual analogy between celebrities and dolls, her proprietary use of celebrities' first names in her titles for her art and her interviews, and her fantasies of emotional bonds with celebrities, all illustrate the relevance of Winnicott's 'transitional objects' theory to her work. Vine acknowledges that she understands celebrities are cultural constructs, as Chapter One (p. 55) acknowledges that fans often do.<sup>595</sup> In accordance with Graw's perspective, Vine states, 'Even though I am aware that it is mainly fiction, I can still get quite swept up in the stories I am given and that make up the pictures in my head'.<sup>596</sup>

### **Gender and Fandom in Vine's Paintings**

Vine, in personal interviews, articulates her belief that criticism of her work and media attention on the sensational aspects of her biography demonstrate entrenched sexism in the mass media and art-press. She claims that she focuses on female celebrities whose biographies involve negative media attention as a statement against women's unfair treatment in contemporary society.<sup>597</sup> These criticisms have some credence, since gender inequality in the contemporary community is a subject of frequent controversy, as critiqued by critics such as Jerry Saltz,<sup>598</sup> Jori Finkle<sup>599</sup> and Dorsey Waxter.<sup>600</sup> Yet, Vine's complaints rarely expand beyond responses to her own experiences and, while interest in her biography focuses on the gendered aspect of her life-style – particularly pertaining to sex-work and single motherhood – the media focus on her personal life reflects cultural assumptions about the gendered nature of media consumption, as well as art world biases.

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<sup>595</sup> I. Graw, *High Price*, 162.

<sup>596</sup> A. Finel Honigman, 'Dawn Mellor in Conversation with Ana Finel Honigman', *Saatchi Online* (13 November 2007), accessed 11 October 2014 at [www.magazine.saatchionline.com/culture/reports-from/los-angeles-reports-from/stella\\_vine\\_in\\_conversation\\_wi](http://www.magazine.saatchionline.com/culture/reports-from/los-angeles-reports-from/stella_vine_in_conversation_wi).

<sup>597</sup> Personal email interview with Stella Vine (1-11 August 2007).

<sup>598</sup> J. Saltz, 'Where Are All the Women?', *New York Magazine* (2 September 2012), accessed 25 October 2014 at [www.nymag.com/arts/art/features/40979/](http://www.nymag.com/arts/art/features/40979/).

<sup>599</sup> J. Finkle, 'Confronting Art World Sexism', *The Art Newspaper* (25 October 2014), accessed 25 October 2014 at [www.theartnewspaper.com/blogs/Confronting-art-world-sexism/33107](http://www.theartnewspaper.com/blogs/Confronting-art-world-sexism/33107).

<sup>600</sup> 'We Asked Twenty Women "Is the Art World Biased?" Here Is What They Say', *Artnet.com* (16 September 2014), accessed 25 October 2014 at [www.news.artnet.com/people/we-asked-20-women-is-the-art-world-biased-heres-what-they-said-81162](http://www.news.artnet.com/people/we-asked-20-women-is-the-art-world-biased-heres-what-they-said-81162).

As discussed in Chapter One (p. 77) fandom can function as a form of political resistance and its roots as political expression are especially prevalent in female fans' expression in opposition to gender oppression. As Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs argued, Beatles fans in the pre-feminist sixties used their emotional investments in the band as tools to express their frustrations at gendered limitations and challenge restrictive cultural norms.<sup>601</sup> If Vine's concerns about gender bias are profound influences on her worldview and work, then her art and fandom can be interpreted as expressions of resistance, since she primarily depicts female celebrities whose personal lives have been publically mocked and whose vulnerabilities are significant aspects of their public identities. By commemorating these women during their periods of public vulnerability, Vine challenges their victimisation. Although her art can alternatively be perceived as romanticising vulnerability, Vine often discusses her belief that her subjects react to public shaming with admirable fortitude. So when speaking about her portraits of Diana, Vine said, 'I wanted to show her vulnerability, as well as her strength'.<sup>602</sup> *Murdered, Pregnant, Embalmed* (figure 60) can therefore be read as illustrating Diana's dedication to her public duties despite public invasiveness into her personal life, since Diana appears to be greeting an audience in a receiving line and ignoring the ominous words encroaching within the perimeters of Vine's canvas. In this context, Vine uses celebrities as representative icons for common emotional states and experiences, which is a fundamental purpose of celebrity in contemporary society, as described in Chapter One (pp. 42-44).

### **Violence and Pathology in Vine's Artworks**

Despite Vine's desire to champion her subjects, her works' indication of violence complicates her images' impact on audiences. As Barber identified, 'the damage – dripping blood, running mascara – overrides the sweetness'.<sup>603</sup> Vine, ironically, presents her work as a cathartic response to the tensions underlining fandom that her art appears to exemplify. These contradictions are most apparent in her depictions of

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<sup>601</sup> B. Ehrenreich, E. Hess and G. Jacobs, 'Beatlemania', 84–106.

<sup>602</sup> C. Lewis, 'Tragedy and Glamour: Stella Vine at Modern Art Oxford', *Culture 24* (20 July 2007), accessed 25 October 2014 at [www.culture24.org.uk/art/painting-and-drawing/portraits/art49219](http://www.culture24.org.uk/art/painting-and-drawing/portraits/art49219).

<sup>603</sup> L. Barber, 'Vine Times', *The Observer* (8 July 2007), accessed 10 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/jul/08/art](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/jul/08/art).

Diana. Sociologists and scholars studying celebrity uphold Diana as exemplifying issues implicit in celebrity and fandom.<sup>604</sup> Vine, in her art, uses Diana's image as a tool to address the paradox between fans' adoring and aggressive, idolising and objectifying impulses towards celebrities.

When responding to art about Diana by lesser known artists than Vine, Walker proposes that the public's grief was 'partially fuelled by guilt: the paparazzi would not have been hounding her if it had not been for the fact that millions of readers bought the newspapers in which their photos of her appeared. Thus, every fan of Diana was complicit in her death'.<sup>605</sup> Reflecting this interpretation, Vine explained in an interview:

I felt like a criminal sometimes when painting Diana because I hadn't understood her well enough when she was alive. It was only when she was dead that it all came together and I understood what I had lost. Now that she was dead, I was painting her and that made me feel sometimes like a criminal. And I missed her.<sup>606</sup>

In *Murdered, Pregnant and Embalmed*, the words of the title drip from their perimeters. This effect reflects their evocation of conspiracy theories about Diana's death and the placement of the words illustrates Vine's narrative implication that fame was a menacing factor in Diana's life. And, in addition to championing Diana's dignity despite this threat, Vine's use of lettering in this work responds to concerns that fandom is inherently a violation of celebrities' privacy because fans' deepest desire involves rupturing divisions between themselves and stars. This assumption originates from cultural images of fans as stalkers and documented instances when fans violate celebrities' privacy or attack celebrities.<sup>607</sup> This perception of fans overlooks the significance of *amae* in fans' pleasure, as demonstrated by McGinley, Peyton and Kilimnik. *Amae* is not a factor in Vine's work since her proximity to

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<sup>604</sup> W. Brown, M. Basil and M. Bocarnea, 'Social Influence of an International Celebrity: Responses to the Death of Princess Diana', *Journal of Communication* 53, no. 4 (2003), 587–605.

<sup>605</sup> J. Walker, *Art and Celebrity*, 123.

<sup>606</sup> Personal telephone interview with Stella Vine (12 September 2008).

<sup>607</sup> G. Mair, *Star Stalkers* (London: Pinnacle 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1995).

celebrity is less significant to her work and identity than her temporary status as a minor celebrity. In her earliest work, before her experiences with fame, signs of violence are not indicators of her violent desires towards celebrities but symbols for her concerns about the effect fans' attention has on celebrities. Her later work, after she experienced fame, no longer contained these signs of violence and lost the tension that justified critical attention on her art.

The following section focuses on three artists whose work contains signs of violence that are more graphic, elaborate and sophisticated than the blood and disarray seen in Vine's earliest imagery. Their art also expresses concerns that fans' desires damage and endanger celebrities, yet their expression excels beyond hers and their accomplishments, as professional artists, exceed hers. Their demonstrations of fandom, however, remain complicated by ambiguity, whereas Vine is forthright about her position as a fan. The importance of that position and its influence on her art will be explored through the following three comparisons.

## II. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

### ***My Marilyn* by Richard Hamilton Contrasted with Vine's Portraits**

*My Marilyn* (1965) by Richard Hamilton (Pimlico, England 1922–2011) consists of four variations of an appropriated contact sheet of photographs showing Marilyn Monroe running on a beach. George Barris took the original photographs for a November 1962 issue of *Town* magazine. Monroe marked the original negatives with ink and Hamilton later silkscreened the contact sheet onto large canvases and marked his copies with paint. Monroe made the original marks to indicate areas where she felt that her body needed to be retouched. However, when Hamilton recreated these marks in his work, they become signs of his empathy with Monroe.<sup>608</sup> Hamilton's appropriation of Barris's photographs was consistent with his pioneering interest in pop culture. Hamilton is credited with the origins of the term 'Pop Art' because his 1956 collage *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* featured the image of a celebrity body-builder holding an oversized lollipop with the word written on its wrapper. He did not produce his work as a fan, but expressed his

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<sup>608</sup> S. Sherwin, 'Richard Hamilton', *W* (4 March 2014), accessed 19 October 2014 at [www.wmagazine.com/culture/art-and-design/2014/03/richard-hamilton-tate-modern/photos/](http://www.wmagazine.com/culture/art-and-design/2014/03/richard-hamilton-tate-modern/photos/).

intellectual interest in the mechanism of pop culture and consumer culture through collage, satirical video and installation.<sup>609</sup>

For one of the four versions of *My Marilyn* (figure 64), Hamilton reproduces the print in flesh-tones and pastel blue. His palette for the works contains significant sections of pink, white and yellow, which are similar to the colours that Vine uses for her paintings. Over this saccharine base, Hamilton amplifies the aggressive editorial slashes that Monroe made on the original negatives by adding slashes of white, brown and black paint. In another version of the same appropriation, which he also created in 1965, Hamilton expands on these themes through his use of paint. In this work, also titled *My Marilyn*, he covers Monroe's face and body with white and peach paint in some of the sections of the duplicated contact sheet and leaves her image exposed in others (figure 65), appearing to erase Monroe and transform her into a ghost. Historian Steven Madoff interprets the function of Hamilton's paint on the negatives as 'handwritten annotations that deface the image of flesh' as if Hamilton were performing violence against Monroe.<sup>610</sup>

Pop art historian Tillman Osterwold argues that these images signify consumer expectations because Hamilton performs the fewest interventions on images that are 'the most vivid, the most superficial, most beautiful, most smiling portrayals of Marilyn'.<sup>611</sup> However, this critique overlooks the documented fact that Monroe herself made the original marks across her selection of images rejected from the shoot and that by strengthening her commentary through added paint and colour, Hamilton was empathetically recreating her self-critique. The visual impression of Hamilton's additions initially appears critical or violent, but instead *My Marilyn* represents a recent example of how signs of violence marking a celebrity's image can actually signify empathy for the celebrity, in contradiction to Madoff's interpretation. The title

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<sup>609</sup> Surveys of Hamilton's work include: H. Foster, R. Hamilton and M. Craig-Martin, *Richard Hamilton*, Vol. 10 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010); H. Foster, *The First Pop Age: Painting and Subjectivity in the Art of Hamilton, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Richter, and Ruscha* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012); M. Godfrey and P. Schimmel, *Richard Hamilton* (London: Tate Modern, 2014).

<sup>610</sup> Madoff, S.H., ed., *Pop art: a critical history*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 170.

<sup>611</sup> T. Osterwold, *Pop Art* (New York: Taschen, 2003), 213.

of Hamilton's work expresses possession, as in a fan's possessive objectification of a celebrity, but also signifies solidarity with Monroe. Osterwold, however, does not see this empathetic element and he interprets Hamilton's gesture as objectifying Monroe in response to the anonymous criteria of a commercial marketplace that judges celebrities as consumer products. Osterwold claims: 'Hamilton's own criteria, his own preferences and rejections remain undeclared here'.<sup>612</sup> Yet, that reading is at odds with Hamilton's own explanation – seeing himself as humanising Monroe through by extrapolating from her initial markings and giving them serious attention – as well as the evidence in the artwork and title to support Hamilton's affinity for Monroe.

Hamilton's own statements about his process support this interpretation. He has described the impetus for the series as:

Monroe demanded that the results of photographic sessions be submitted to her for vetting before publication. She made indications, brutally and beautifully in conflict with the image, on proofs and transparencies to give approval or reject; or suggestions for retouching that might make them acceptable. After her death some were published ... with her markings – crosses and ticks, notes for retouching, instructions to the photographer, even the venting of physical aggression by attacking the emulsion with nail-file or scissors. There is a fortuitous narcissism to be seen, for the negating cross is also the childish symbol for a kiss; but the violent obliteration of her own image has a self-destructive implication that made her death all the more poignant. *My Marilyn* starts with her signs and elaborates the possibilities these suggest.<sup>613</sup>

Through this juxtaposition, similarities between Hamilton's *My Marilyn* and Vine's paintings become apparent. Although Vine paints her own versions of stars' images rather than appropriating photographs, she sees her work as an imaginative extension of celebrities' private responses to fame and the circumstances that fame creates for them. Vine's portraits of Moss in states of evident distress exemplify Vine's fantasy of representing the model through an artwork that expresses Moss's private feelings about her public identity. By erasing Monroe's image and darkening her aggressive marks on her public photographs of herself, Hamilton is expressing a similar fantasy.

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<sup>612</sup> T. Osterwold, *Pop Art*, 213.

<sup>613</sup> R. Hamilton, *Collected Words 1953–1982* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 65.

Both artists are therefore acting out fantasies of serving as celebrities' agents by representing their subjects' imagined private thoughts, in accordance with the conventions of fans' fictional parasocial interactions.

Despite evidence of fan affinity for Monroe in Hamilton's work and his statements about his work, as well as the aggressive appearance of his amplification of Monroe's markings, *My Marilyn* has not been perceived as motivated by a pathological identification with Monroe, in the same way that Vine's work has been treated. Hamilton's established reputation as an objective commentator on pop culture, as validated by *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?*, ensures that he is not seen as expressing admiration for mass consumer culture. Instead, he is understood to be manifesting a critical interest in its mechanisms through this and subsequent collages appropriating ephemeral pop-culture material.<sup>614</sup> Alternatively, having been trained and then taught at formal art institutions, Hamilton's academic background and his articulate presentation of objectives when creating *My Marilyn* sets him apart from popular conceptions of fans and fans' desires, and obscures the fan impulses in his art from notice by critics such as Osterwold and Madoff.<sup>615</sup>

**Vine's Painted Portraits with Douglas Gordon's Series, *Self-Portrait of You + Me***  
Douglas Gordon (b. Glasgow, 1966–) challenges fans' responsibilities towards celebrities in *Self-Portrait of You + Me* (2011–ongoing). Gordon's series, like Vine's portraits of Moss, Diana and Whiteley in states of distress and rupture, presents celebrities with visible signs of damage. His use of materials – mirrors, fire and photographs – symbolically implicates viewers in the destruction of celebrities' images. When creating art involving the images of celebrities whose biographies involve documented self-harm or victimisation, Gordon's work implies viewers'

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<sup>614</sup> J.P. Stonard, 'Pop in the Age of Boom: Richard Hamilton's "Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?"', *The Burlington Magazine* 149, no. 1254 (2007), 607; J. Reichardt, 'Pop Art and After', *Art International* 7, no. 2 (1963), 42–47; C. Houghton, 'This Was Tomorrow: Pieter Aertsen's "Meat Stall" as Contemporary Art', *The Art Bulletin* 86, No. 2 (June 2004), 280; M. Nixon, A. Potts, B. Fer, A. Hudek and J. Stallabrass, 'Round Table: Tate Modern', *October* 98, (Autumn 2001), 3.

<sup>615</sup> A brief biography of Hamilton can be seen at: Richard Hamilton biography, accessed 19 October 2014 at [www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/richard-hamilton-1244](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/richard-hamilton-1244).

collective involvement in celebrities' destruction, not just the destruction of their superficial image. In these regards, Gordon's work is conceptually akin to Vine's. However, Gordon employs sophisticated aesthetics – similar to Violette's, Quinn's and Dicke's use of monochrome, controlled materials and high-end mixed-medium – which convey a cool, objective, emotionally restrained perspective on fandom and celebrity culture, which is in contrast to the emotionally invested manifestations of fans' subjective sensibilities represented by Vine.

For *Self-Portrait of You + Me*, Gordon appropriated and burnt vintage photographs of Hollywood actors and rock stars and mounted them on mirrors, so the mirrors are exposed through the burnt-out sections (figure 66). Most of the photographs that Gordon appropriates in this series are publicity stills. The celebrities featured in this series are predominantly movie stars from the 1940s and fifties. This is in contrast to the women depicted by Vine, whose interest in contemporary celebrities ascribes different cultural worth to her work since the subjects of Gordon's art have historical credence. Gordon gives no indication that he admires his subjects or feels a fan's emotional attachment to any particular personage included in this series. Instead, his vast range of subjects (estimated in hundreds) appears to aspire towards an objective portrait of pop culture and fans' collective responses to celebrities' images.<sup>616</sup> In contrast to Vine's sale prices, the average price for one of Gordon's mixed-media works in this series is £35,000.<sup>617</sup>

*Self-Portrait of You + Me* combines Gordon's Gothic sensibility with his critical interest in pop culture's mechanisms and its effects on audiences. Critics, such as Catherine Spooner, Maria Antonia Lima and Gilda Williams describe Gordon's art as 'Gothic' because of his evocation of themes in nineteenth-century Gothic literature and his interest in the grotesque, morbidity and decay.<sup>618</sup> Gordon employs this aesthetic

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<sup>616</sup> This estimate was given by Anna Erickson, archivist at Gagosian Gallery (New York) in a phone call conducted on 17 April 2010.

<sup>617</sup> Emmanuelle Dvir, owner of Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv in an email exchange on 19 October 2014.

<sup>618</sup> C. Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 17; M.A. Lima, 'Artistic Monstrosities in New Gothic Art: Creating Shock Waves which Help Us Find a Lost Sense of Ourselves', *Monsters and the Monstrous, Global Interdisciplinary Research Studies* 2, no. 1 (May 2012), 3–9; G. Williams, 'Making Monsters: Gothic Processes and Themes in Contemporary Art',

sensibility to explore references from pop culture that include classic horror cinema, such as his 1993 video installation *24 Hour Psycho*, but also his interest in sports and other genres of Hollywood cinema history. Critic Talia Linz describes Gordon's interest in popular culture, especially film, as 'obsessive'.<sup>619</sup> Her assessment of Gordon's interest reflects Jeremy Deller's characterisation of fandom as predicated on obsession, which was mentioned in Chapter One (pp.79-80). However, Gordon's interest in any particular piece of pop culture, rather than the concept of it, remains obscure in his art. Gordon equivocates about his personal, emotional investment in his appropriated imagery. He told a reporter in 2012, 'Most artists would say that everything becomes a huge self-portrait. I don't know if that would be accurate... In the end, it is all about "psychological archaeology"'.<sup>620</sup> This statement perpetuates ambiguity about Gordon's intentions, since his implication is that fandom might be an unconscious motivation and he might represent the self-definition that Sandvoss asserts rests at the core of fans' media consumption. However, unlike Vine, Gordon does not conspicuously create his art from a fan's perspective.

Complicating his work is Gordon's focus for his interventions on images of celebrities' eyes. In Gordon's *Blind* series, which is separate from his *Self-Portrait of You + Me*, he carefully cuts the eyes, like Dicke does, from publicity stills and mounts them on white board. An example from the hundreds of works in this series is his 2002 appropriation of a black-and-white photograph of actor James Mason, *Blind James (white)* (figure 67). Eyes are also removed for images in his *Self-Portrait of You + Me* series but fire expands the holes beyond specific perimeters to affect each image differently. Gordon described his impetus to create this series being a desire to revive familiar images. He says, 'One way to look at something over and over again is to take it apart ... in an analytical, structural, quite academic fashion, or we can simply

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*University of Westminster Lecture* (London, 2009), accessed 21 October 2014 at [www.esearch.gold.ac.uk/3295/](http://www.esearch.gold.ac.uk/3295/).

<sup>619</sup> T. Linz, 'Douglas Gordon: Hope, without Faith', *Art Monthly Australia* 270 (Jun 2014), 20.

<sup>620</sup> K. Wright, 'In the Studio: Douglas Gordon, Artist', *The Independent* (15 December 2012), accessed 21 October 2012 at [www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/in-the-studio-douglas-gordon-artist-8412990.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/in-the-studio-douglas-gordon-artist-8412990.html).

put one thing beside itself and see how they compare'.<sup>621</sup> Seen in the light of this quote, Gordon objectifies celebrities in this series. His excision of their eyes dehumanises them and his interpretation of his process portrays the celebrities as objects whose appearance is constructed and static. Gordon's process in this series is closer to re-contextualisation of ready-made objects into an art context than fans' textual productivity, according to the terms defined by Fiske, as examined in Chapter One (p. 77).

*Self-Portrait of You + Me*, however, is more directly related to fandom than Gordon's *Blind* series, since this work specifically addresses audiences' involvement in the construction of fans' identification with celebrities. The central differences between the two projects are the boards beneath the images and Gordon's method of removing sections from his found photographs. The inclusion of mirrors, instead of blank board, implicates the works' viewers into their narrative by literally including the viewers' presence in the works' appearance. By burning, instead of cutting, these works, Gordon represents unrestrained emotional responses rather than purposeful, premeditated, interventions into his images. A representative work from this series is *Self-Portrait of You + Me (Marilyn 5)* (figure 68), which presented a colour publicity still of Monroe laying seductively on a bed, with her eyes and mouth burnt away by flame and the mirror beneath the photograph exposed.

Critic Wes Hill described specific works from this series featuring burnt replicas of Warhol's silkscreen series of Elvis Presley, Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe (figure 66) as representing 'the paradoxical self-sufficiency of Warhol's apparent mirror-like openness against Gordon's attempt to reflect the darker aspects of the collective unconscious'.<sup>622</sup> In this context, Gordon's work looks less like the art of a fan and more like an artist's work commenting on fandom. Audiences' propensity for *schadenfreude* and sadistic impulses towards celebrities are the 'darker aspects of the collective unconscious' signalled in Hill's interpretation of Gordon's series through

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<sup>621</sup> J. Richards, ed., *Inside the Studio: Two Decades of Talks with Artists in New York* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2004), 223.

<sup>622</sup> W. Hill, 'Douglas Gordon', *Frieze* 146 (146, April 2012), accessed 20 October 2014 at [www.frieze.com/issue/review/douglas-gordon1/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/douglas-gordon1/).

his contrast with Warhol. This assessment indicates that Hill interprets Warhol as plainly adoring celebrity culture, as a fan, whereas Gordon represents audiences' aggressive and hateful impulses towards celebrities. However, as art historian Hal Foster recognised, Warhol was 'drawn to celebrities in moments of public distress'.<sup>623</sup> The celebrities whom Gordon selects for this series are archetypal examples of celebrities' public suffering and, as Hill observes, Gordon visually represents destructive aspects of fans' interest in their unhappiness.

Gordon himself confirms the purpose of this series as criticising the dangers of parasocial interactions yet he also sounds like a fan when speaking about his work. He describes his series as:

nothing to do with the destruction of [celebrities]; it is more that, as time goes on, our idols become not quite as whole as when we first saw them. ... when you get so close to something that you love, you inevitably destroy it.<sup>624</sup>

Vine expresses this perspective by positioning the ominous words associated with Diana's death at the forefront of her portrait *Murdered, Pregnant, Embalmed* (figure 60). These words indicate that fans' intense interest in Diana's life contributed to her death, thereby demonstrating Gordon's argument that fans' fixations harm celebrities.

### **Vine's Painted Portraits with Dawn Mellor's Macabre Portraits of Celebrities**

The themes outlined above are enhanced by the grotesque fantasies depicted by British artist Dawn Mellor (b. Manchester, 1970–) in her paintings. Unlike Gordon, Mellor uses the same medium as Vine to illustrate fantasies with greater graphic violence and morbidity, although she retains Gordon's position of ambiguity when discussing the significance of her fan feelings for her creative and conceptual processes. But whilst Vine is evasive about the violent implications of her inclusion of blood and signs of violence in her art, Mellor makes these aspects the conceptual core of her paintings. In April 2014, she published a monograph of drawings that she made of Michael Jackson and related celebrities when she was a teenager. In these

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<sup>623</sup> H. Foster, 'Test Subjects', *October* 132 (Spring 2010), 36.

<sup>624</sup> D. Gordon, 'Art Attack at Tate Britain: Artists Explain Why They Sabotage', *The Guardian* (28 September 2013), accessed 21 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/sep/28/tate-britain-art-attack-artists-sabotage](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/sep/28/tate-britain-art-attack-artists-sabotage).

works, she consciously and eloquently explores the forms of fandom that Vine embodies. The feminist pundit Germaine Greer has observed in an essay about Vine:

Because we recognise the celebrities in the works, the images are anchored in our shared reality, but the distortions make us aware at the same time that these well known figures are fictitious, merely virtual, endlessly replicated as identity cannot be.<sup>625</sup>

But Mellor takes the act of distortion even further. She employs humour to satirise celebrity and fans' conflicted impulses. She also challenges her own fan affinities in her work, meaning that she creates her paintings from the dual position of being a fan and criticising fandom. Mellor is presented as a comparison to Vine and the final artist discussed in this thesis because critical acceptance of her work presents the possibility that artists' fandom can be critically supported, as long as artists balance their emotional investments in their subject-matter with distanced and objective self-critique. Mellor's art is more violent and troubling than other artworks addressed in this thesis. However, Mellor positions herself as this thesis' closest artistic equivalent to an aca-fan. Her art's conceptual sophistication presents a model for artists to actively engage critical discourse about fandom while representing the tensions and contradictions within their own fan affinities.

Mellor creates recognisable likenesses of her subjects while making the surface textures of her paintings into dramatic components that express her opinion of celebrity. In contrast, the surfaces for Vine's paintings are glossy and flat, evoking the flatness of the magazine pages where her subjects are seen, but Mellor's canvases are dense and clotted with aggressively applied paint. For her, the materiality of paint is an expressive element in her art. She juxtaposes severe gestural marks and sections of smooth colour. Catherine Grant and Tahani Nadim Mellor described this style as 'Mellor immers[ing] herself within a strange hysterical space that is part obsessive fan, part dedicated expressionist'.<sup>626</sup> She uses a murky palette, giving her oil paintings the appearance of premature aging and adding a Goth appearance to her portraits of contemporary celebrities. Critic Chris Bors confirms the tensions in her work by

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<sup>625</sup> G. Greer, *Stella Vine*, 8.

<sup>626</sup> T. Nadim and C. Grant, 'Dawn Mellor', *Make: the Magazine of Women's Art* (2002), 5.

describing Mellor's style as 'straddle[ing] the line between realism and a slightly cartoony style, forming her figures with loose brushstrokes and unfussy rendering'.<sup>627</sup> Employing this style, Mellor matches her celebrity subjects' theatricality. Critic Elizabeth Mahoney writes: 'There is a voodoo power at work... Before you pull away from Mellor's work in horror, it deftly reminds you that we are all complicit in making these monsters, and keeping the ghastly images of them alive'.<sup>628</sup>

In this manner, Mellor uses horrific imagery and black humour to explore her fascination with an idiosyncratic selection of celebrity subjects and to critically investigate society's treatment of celebrities. Like Gordon, she articulates feelings of fandom although her work appears to critically comment on the destructive impact of fandom on celebrities. Her paintings present public figures from disparate fields, including Hollywood, academia, politics and creative subcultures: French feminist Helene Cixous, French post-structuralist Gilles Deleuze, performance artist/model Grace Jones, former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, pop singer Christina Aguilera, Hollywood icons Elisabeth Taylor, Catherine Deneuve (figure 69) and Audrey Hepburn, horror film actress Linda Blair and a series devoted to Judy Garland, as Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard of Oz*. This range of subjects reflects the issues of taste and value judgement presented in the passage quoted from Jensen in the introduction of this thesis (p. 32). As Jensen argues, judgements about the objects of fan attachments determine scholarly and critical responses to fans. However, Mellor's list of subjects includes figures from areas of culture, including pop music and the Hollywood history, who also feature in art by McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine. The pantheon of subjects presented in her paintings include figures from areas outside these other artists' scope, although a key component of Mellor's work is her equal handling of all her subjects.

Mellor joins these figures through her unifying thesis that fame transforms and corrupts all celebrities. To argue this position, she depicts all her famous subjects as supernatural, grotesque fantasy characters. Thus she, like Vine, represents celebrities as zombies in order to illustrate her conception of fame as a mutating, toxic force for

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<sup>627</sup> C. Bors, 'Dawn Mellor: the Conspirators', *ArtReview Magazine* (July 2010).

<sup>628</sup> E. Mahoney, 'Dawn Mellor', *The Guardian* (13 March 2008), accessed 19 October 2014 at [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2008/mar/13/art/](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2008/mar/13/art/).

her subjects. This approach to celebrity is supported by social scientists Philip Drake and Andy Miah. They propose that celebrities cannot be distinguished by professional categories, but propose that:

a more productive way of understanding celebrity is as a mediating frame rather than as the particular quality of an individual. It is the public recognition and circulation of celebrity that is absolutely intrinsic to its being.<sup>629</sup>

Therefore, politicians and pop culture figures share character attributes and experiences that separate them from people who cannot be described as famous. For Mellor, this perspective on fame enables her to perform acts of symbolic violence on figures whose personas evoke very different associations in their audiences.

Mellor's art is a visual version of slash fiction. She employs sexually graphic imagery to exorcise her own fantasies, as well as satirising popular media speculation about celebrities' life-styles. As discussed in Chapter One (p.53), slash fiction expresses fans' surreal, subversive and often same-sex fantasies for celebrities and established fictional characters.<sup>630</sup> Examples of Mellor's version of the genre are her series devoted to Judy Garland as Dorothy Gale (figure 71) and her 2005 painting *The Librarians* (figure 70). In *The Librarians*, the then-acting US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, is seen seated at desk in a library and lustfully looking at the back of a young woman's erotically positioned body. Although this body recalls soft-core pin-up models, the head is recognisably a portrait of Hilary Clinton. Both characters have apparent scars, wounds and writing scrawled on their skin. This work combines Mellor's personal sexual fantasies with references to homophobic rumours in public forums. Although Rice and Clinton are publically heterosexual, American hate groups use rumours about their repressed sexual orientations to undermine their authority.<sup>631</sup> Mellor's image satirically responds to these rumours by exaggerating them and presenting the politicians according to the conventions of vintage pulp-fiction book

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<sup>629</sup> P. Drake, and A. Miah, 'The Cultural Politics of Celebrity', *Cultural Politics* 6, no. 1 (2010), 51.

<sup>630</sup> C. Bacon-Smith, 'Spock Among the Women', *New York Times Sunday Book Review* (16 November 1986).

<sup>631</sup> Discussions of these rumours can be read at: K. Thomas, 'Imagining Lesbian Legal Theory', *New York City Law Review* 8 (2005), 505–510; C. Templin, 'Hillary Clinton as Threat to Gender Norms: Cartoon Images of the First Lady', *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 23, (1999), 20–36.

covers. Yet she also admits to being attracted to the fantasy and enjoying the act of painting it.<sup>632</sup>

Mellor's artistic form of slash fiction is expanded upon in her 2007–2008 cycle of paintings depicting Dorothy Gale, the character played by Judy Garland in the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, in a variety of surreal, grotesque and sexual fantasies. *Surrender Dorothy* (figure 71), one of Mellor's six related, large-scale paintings depicting her personal fantasies of Dorothy, presents the character embracing Regan, the character of possessed girl from the 1973 horror film *The Exorcist* in a field of hay and surrounded by severed body parts. As Mellor told critic Ellen Cantor, her interest in both fictional characters is because they were formative sexual fantasies for her during her early adolescence.<sup>633</sup> These images of Gale, as well as *The Librarians* (figure 70), constitute evidence of her fantasies of identification with celebrities whom she admires, even though the violent and surreal nature of her images distorts this association. This is in sharp contrast to Vine, whose conflation of her identity with her subjects' personas complies with theories discussed in Chapter One (1.5) describing fans' conception of celebrities as idealised versions of themselves. Mellor does not aspire to idealise her subjects or envision them as idealised versions of herself. Instead, she presents her celebrity subjects as embodiments of extreme desires and exaggerated characteristics.

Another point of contrast between Mellor and the principle four artists in this thesis, is that whereas Peyton primarily paints male rock stars who were publically known as self-destructive, Kilimnik's subjects are often perceived as vulnerable to public exploitation and Vine predominantly paints female celebrities whose biographies include periods of public shame and scandal, Mellor perceives all celebrities as vulnerable to audiences' aggression. In her interviews, Mellor argues that fans' sadistic impulses towards celebrities are inherent elements in celebrity culture. She says, 'Celebrity culture needs people to become grotesque in order for some to feel beautiful, morally superior and classier'.<sup>634</sup> She demonstrates this attitude in her work

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<sup>632</sup> Personal telephone interview with Dawn Mellor (12 May 2013).

<sup>633</sup> E. Cantor, 'Dawn Mellor', 45.

<sup>634</sup>R. Gygax, *Dawn Mellor* (Zurich: JRP Ringer for Migros Museum fur Gegenwarskunst, 2008), 29.

by defacing celebrities' celebrated beauty, as in her painting of Catherine Deneuve attired like her character in Brunel's 1967 film *Belle de Jour* but with her face covered in faeces (figure 69). As this portrait of Catherine Deneuve demonstrates, Mellor's art lacks the counterbalancing semblance of sweetness seen in Vine's palette and methods of depiction. Mellor's art is also devoid of the 'girlishness' that Smith recognized in Kilimnik's work and the adolescent aspects that other critics observed in Peyton's art. Mellor's paintings therefore attenuate tensions in fandom that these other artists' work represents because her art highlights negative elements through her narratives and technique.

Another point of contrast is that whereas Vine explicitly uses celebrities as surrogates to tell her version of her life story, Mellor distances herself from her paintings' internal narratives by producing her paintings in the guise of unspecified alter-egos. She conceives of this artistic persona as fictionalized exaggeration of a pathological fan. Through this guise, she satirises stereotypes of fans as obsessive and deviant by presenting her work as if created by a character embodying these extremes. Grant and Nadim describe Mellor's alter-ego as a device enabling her to express 'obsessive adoration for female celebrities and an inclination towards indecent and sometimes even criminal behaviour'.<sup>635</sup> Mellor's use of 'alter-egos', who are exaggerated facets of herself, can also be seen as amplified versions of Vine. The complicated emotions that Vine admits feeling for her subjects are magnified in Mellor's portraits, which Mellor creates in the guise of overly obsessive fans.<sup>636</sup> According to Nadim and Grant, an alter-ego allows Mellor to explore the psychological depths of fandom while retaining her intellectual awareness of its ramifications and nuances. They write:

Although Mellor sees herself as quite separate from her characters, the existence of alert egos adds seriousness to the work: since far from letting her escape responsibility, they allow her to uncompromisingly follow their fictitious demands and obsessions whilst at the same time allowing her to constantly re-evaluate her position as a painter.<sup>637</sup>

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<sup>635</sup> T. Nadim and C. Grant, 'Dawn Mellor', 5–7.

<sup>636</sup> R. Gygax, *Dawn Mellor*, 30.

<sup>637</sup> T. Nadim and C. Grant, 'Dawn Mellor', 5–7.

In this evaluation, Mellor's alter egos justify her aggression towards her subjects. Mellor, however, articulates a different perspective when speaking with Raphael Gygax, an art historian to whom she explains that her alter egos are only exaggerated facets of herself. As Mellor says:

[By inventing a character] from which to make work, there are times during acting or posing when complex emotions can arise that are not necessarily real or fake... sometimes there is slippage where I forget to act or feel liberated enough from my embarrassment or shame to become earnest, knowing I may censor, remove or respond to these genuine emotions later on... every painting becomes a section of a self-portrait, or rather part of a journey in attempting to find new desires, discover repressed feelings, construct new rituals and enjoy emotional catharsis... [In my work] I want to take responsibility and discover my moral position... The work is the result of created rituals that are not ironic, though sometimes I do have to laugh at myself. I trust that using celebrities will lend the work the superficial impression of satire, camp and irony and allow me to do really earnest emotional painting, in disguise.<sup>638</sup>

As Fan Studies scholar Michael DeAngelis argues, 'Camp operates primarily as a phenomenon of identification'.<sup>639</sup> He made this point in reference to gay men's collective fandom for Garland and other Hollywood actresses' whose exaggerated form of femininity publically represented 'a perceived likeness' for their gay male audiences. However, for Mellor 'camp' functions as a method for her to express identification with other, unidentified, elements in certain celebrities' personages and potentially with their self-destructiveness or vulnerability. Mellor, in this statement, confronts the stigma surrounding fandom by addressing her 'embarrassment' or sense of vulnerability at having and expressing emotional investments in celebrity subjects. She does not directly say whether she employs alter-egos to evade the criticism directed at Vine and the other artists in this thesis whose candid expressions of fandom are viewed derisively or dismissively by critics or whether she has internalised prevalent cultural stereotypes concerning fans. However, her assumption that celebrities' images in her art makes her paintings 'camp' implies that she is uncomfortable with her own fan feelings. The 'responsibility' that she aspires to

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<sup>638</sup> Personal telephone interview with Dawn Mellor (10 November 2008).

<sup>639</sup> M. DeAngelis, *Gay Fandom and Crossover Stardom: James Dean, Mel Gibson, and Keanu Reeves*. (North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2001), 4.

explore in her art is thus similar to the feeling of culpability that Vine articulates when painting Diana. In her art, Mellor graphically examines exploitative impulses within fandom, which Peyton alludes to when romanticising her subjects' unhealthy aesthetics, Kilimnik illustrates in *Kate Moss with Sparkles* (figure 40) and Vine demonstrates with her use of blood and melted make-up. In Mellor's art, these impulses are exaggerated through the violent markings she makes on her subjects and her depiction of them as zombies.

Yet, Mellor also presents fandom as a positive impulse by describing her art as 'self-portraiture'. In her work, she reveals intimate information about herself by disclosing which celebrities attract her attention, much like McGinley reveals himself through his expression of admiration for Morrissey. By referring to her art as 'self-portraiture', she confirms Sandvoss's premise that fans use media consumption to construct and represent their identities – especially as she addresses formative influences on her sexual identity. However, the complexity that Mellor articulates in her quotes is not evident in her artwork because she does not overtly express the adoring, emotionally invested, possessive and projective impulses that the four central artists in this thesis explore. She acknowledges her fandom in interviews, and her work's similarity to slash fiction implies a fan's form of sexual investment in celebrity subject matter, yet the tensions expressed by Vine, and the other three core artists, are absent in Mellor's art itself.

Beyond their opposing palettes and fluency with scholarship about fandom, the critical differences between Vine and Mellor are the transparency of their fan identities and the complexity of their fan feelings. Whereas Vine presents herself as a fan creating portraits from that perspective, Mellor, by contrast, distances herself from her personal relationship with fandom through her use of that alter-egos that she assumes while painting. This creative device allows Mellor to use humour, satire and extreme forms of expression to objectively comment on fandom whereas Vine creates work from her subjective perspective, as a self-acknowledged fan.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter explores how Vine, both as a public personality and through her artwork, has come to represent popular perceptions and misconceptions of fandom and celebrity. Public response to her art brings the role of fandom in contemporary art into perspective because the salient qualities of her strongest artwork highlight the art communities' values and preferences. Conceptually, Vine's work counterbalances McGinley's adoring, worshipful images of Morrissey because it displays fans' aggressive responses to celebrities. Her art also expands on themes embedded in Peyton's and Kilimnik's paintings because she graphically depicts the unsettling elements some critics perceive as subtexts to Kilimnik's art and which, this thesis has argued, also exist in Peyton's paintings. In this context, Vine's work completes this thesis's study of artists' strategies and mechanisms for expressing their fandom and portraying the celebrities they admire.

Vine's biography is engaged in this chapter as a central influence on the content of her artwork and the context for her works' critical reception. She acknowledges that her personal experiences motivate her fandom and her artwork. However, this chapter argues that media interest in Vine's life story drives coverage of her art and interpretations of her work's reflection on public perception of fandom. Coincidental correspondence between her biography and popular conceptions of fandom influence media interest in her artwork. Journalists, such as those quoted in this chapter, employ the conventions for celebrity profiles when writing about Vine. Therefore, articles in mainstream publications focus on the sensational aspects of her life story rather than devoting serious critical attention to a discussion of her artwork's merits and intended meaning.

To summarise Vine's expressive tactics; her choices of material superficially present an idealised image of fame. This impression is produced by her saccharine colour selection, acrylic material and illustrative method. Her portraits demonstrate Rojek's theories about the psychological condition of achieved celebrities. In the context of Rojek's understanding, Vine harmonises her subjects' split selves by anointing their doll-like appearances with blood, dripping mascara and melting skin.<sup>640</sup> This art represents celebrities harmed by fame instead of actualising her personal fantasies of

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<sup>640</sup> C. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 167.

celebrities' destruction or harm. Although this method of representation evokes a strong argument about fandom's paradoxical nature, Vine's images lack the subtlety and skill shown by other artists considered in this thesis. For this reason, this thesis does not champion her art as the strongest representation in contemporary art of what Lewis describes as 'two competing fan impulses, love and hate'.<sup>641</sup> With respect to the conceptual credibility of the impulses that Lewis describes, this chapter presents three examples of artists expressing extreme manifestations of fandom's inherent paradox in what could be argued is a much more powerful way. However, Vine is the subject of focused attention in this chapter because the fandom of Hamilton, Gordon and Mellor is obscured by their aesthetic choices and creative devices, such as Mellor's use of alter-egos. By contrast, Vine's fandom is directly on display; her work functions as a compelling illustration of principal concerns and paradoxes inherent to fandom.

The responses generated by all of the artists' works in this chapter demonstrate how forthright forms of fandom are regarded differently from the fandom that can be mistaken for objective commentary rather than emotionally invested expression. The complex fandom exhibited in Vine's art and art by Hamilton, Gordon and Mellor is an often overlooked but pervasive aspect of contemporary culture wherein, as Sandvoss describes, individuals construct and express their identities through media consumption. Vine's expression of her identity through her media consumption turned her into an object of media attention. Vine's hybridised identity as a fan/celebrity demonstrates how fandom is misidentified in the mass-media as a marginalised identity when it is actually in the aesthetic mainstream; and how fandom as a motivator for art-making has been marginalised by being identified with Vine.

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<sup>641</sup> L. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (London: Routledge, 1992), 151.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that fandom is evident in certain artists' work depicting celebrity in the 1990s and early years of the twenty-first century. Fans' ambivalence and contradictory emotional responses to celebrities make compelling subject matter for art. But the art addressed in this thesis differs from previous generations' ironic or cynical work, and while work produced by the four central artists represents fandom within the art-world, the artists' fandom has been misunderstood and disparaged by some of their critical community.

Fandom is an undervalued inspiration for artists because prevailing cultural conceptions of fandom are influenced by stigmatizing subtexts and therefore inaccurate. Despite the significance of fandom in contemporary culture, as identified by theorists such as Sandvoss, Lewis and Jenkins whose work was discussed in Chapter One, fandom is a marginalized impulse for participants in contemporary art. Artists explicitly expressing fan feelings may achieve commercial success but their motivation raises concerns among critics who question the sincerity of their expression and their credibility.

As this thesis demonstrated, fandom can be read in art by McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine using tools from Fan Studies. These artists express elements of fandom in their work through formal mechanisms, such as McGinley's use of light and colour to represent fans' adoration and devotion for Morrissey and Peyton's light, loving brushwork. However, they also express ambivalences formally and iconographically, as seen in Vine's depiction of celebrities as porcelain dolls. The four principle artists' works represent fans' emotionally invested use of celebrity imagery as forms of self-expression. The "collapse," in Peyton's phrase, between self and celebrity in these artists' works highlights how fandom motivates these four artists.<sup>642</sup> This element distinguishes the artists' work from artworks which interpose conceptual and aesthetic distance between the artists' identities and the celebrities they select as subject matter. Unlike artists in previous generations who appropriated images from pop-culture to criticize or challenge their source material and its societal context, the artists in this thesis use celebrities' images to express facets of their personal, subjective, identities. McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine support the premise that they are fans in public statements about their work and selection of

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<sup>642</sup> R. Pruitt and S. LaFreniere, 'Elizabeth Peyton', *Index Magazine* (April 2000), accessed 28 March 2014 at [www.indexmagazine.com/interviews/elizabeth\\_peyton.shtml](http://www.indexmagazine.com/interviews/elizabeth_peyton.shtml).

celebrity subjects, but their articulation of their fan status is not independent from evidence in their artwork.

This thesis argues that artists whose aesthetic choices mask their fan identities and repudiate cultural stereotypes about fans are perceived differently, and more favorably, than artists whose work overtly expresses recognizable aspects of fandom. Despite ostensible differences and internal contradictions in work by the four principle artists, this thesis also argues that they all express their identities as fans and to different degrees their work incorporates the core components of fandom. Although adoration and transgression and artistic manifestations of these impulses might initially appear to be in binary opposition, closer examination reveals overlap and continuities between these modes of artistic relationship to celebrity subjects.

Six questions, divided into three sections, have formed the foundation for the research and analysis presented in this thesis. This conclusion will survey the principal material presented in the previous chapters in response to the research questions. Interrelated questions were grouped together earlier but they are presented separately in this conclusion in order to focus on distinctions between them and to highlight relevant issues relating to each artist. First presented in the Introduction, the questions were referenced throughout the main text. Isolating them in this conclusion demonstrates how McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine can connect and compare with each other. The eleven comparative case studies are also interwoven into these sections to support conclusions about the four principle artists and the relevant research question.

### **1. What is a fan, and what is the cultural importance of fandom in contemporary art and society?**

The definition of fandom employed as the conceptual base for this thesis is, “[the] emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text.”<sup>643</sup> However, more detailed definitions and perspectives concerning the term were critically engaged in Chapter One in order to provide a conceptual framework and sociological context for the following four chapters dedicated to work by the four central artists. The core elements of fandom engaged throughout are: celebrity identification,

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<sup>643</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*, 8.

parasocial interactions, *amae* and fans' apparently contradictory impulses toward adoration and aggression, objectification and empathy. Alongside definitions of fandom and discussion of the psychological components of fandom, Chapter One advanced a profile of fandom in contemporary culture and served as a defence of fandom, as well as an explanation of why a defence is required.

This chapter presented fans' images in popular and scholarly analysis. Associations between fans and disempowered social groups demonstrate how fandom can be misused as a tool to delineate cultural boundaries. These assumptions correspond with fandom's questionable origins as a form of "fanaticism," and cultural representations of fandom as associated with adolescence, which means that it is viewed with ambivalence when it is extended into adulthood. Beyond treating them as manifestations of emotional immaturity, the cultural responses to fans also reflect societal attitudes towards gender, class and sexual preference.

The etymology of the word "fan" connects fandom to "fanaticism" and "fancy," alluding to cultural concerns that fans' affection for celebrities is potentially pathological. This assumption and the word's origins were traced to early nineteenth-century popular literature that continues to colour fans' cultural reputations. While acknowledging that extreme forms of fandom exist on the periphery of fan culture, Chapter 1 presented findings from various disciplines demonstrating that fandom, and celebrity culture, serve progressive and positive functions in contemporary culture for individuals and society as a whole. As Jensen writes, "respectable social types (i.e. students, professors, social critics, patrons, aficionados or collectors) could also be defined as 'fans,' in that they display interest, affection and attachment, especially for figures in, or aspects of, their chosen field".<sup>644</sup> Although the potential negative effects of fame on individual celebrities were addressed and informed the analysis of many of the artworks discussed throughout this thesis, the sociological and psychological evidence presented in Chapter One established that fandom is not inherently pathological. However, the issue of whether pathology is relevant to identifying and contextualizing fandom underlies critical reactions to the principal artists' works and

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<sup>644</sup> J. Jensen, 'Fandom as pathology', 9.

identities, as well as material presented in Chapter One which describes broader cultural conceptions of fans.

## **2. Do apparent contradictions and ambiguities in the central artists' work discredit or demonstrate their fan identities?**

As demonstrated by Chapter One, fandom is a complex set of responses to media culture, although it is often misperceived as an individual's or audience's unconditionally adoring attachment to a celebrity or a mass-produced text. This element of fandom was isolated for discussion in an independent research question, instead of being integrated into the following question concerning fandom in general, because this duality often leads to misinterpretation of artists' work about celebrities. Because fandom is frequently portrayed in cultural consciousness as uncritical and passive, indications of critical distance and negativity can be misinterpreted as evidence that artists are not fans. This tendency is evidenced in critical concern that Vine's *Hi Paul can you come over?* purposefully degrades Diana's image rather than represent Vine's empathy for her. This confusion has been repeated with critical reactions to Dicke's collages, in which apparent images of violence have been perceived as criticisms of fashion and attacks on models, despite Dicke's articulation of her fan affinity for her subjects. This duality within fandom is especially relevant with artwork that is analogous to Slash Fiction, particularly work by Kilimnik and Mellor, since they envision celebrities emerged in their personal fantasies. Both artists remove celebrities' images from their established contexts, constructed by industries outside the artists, and employ the celebrities like actors in their idiosyncratic fictions. Because these fictions frequently evoke comparisons with sinister or explicitly nightmarish narratives, they can be misconstrued as aggressive fantasies, although scholarly interpretation of Slash Fiction argues otherwise. Studies of Slash Fiction instead provide an analogy for how fans appropriate, negotiate, rework and radically alter celebrities' images in order to express their desires to know, possess and feel intimate with those celebrities.

Transgressive art can also express fans' sense of identification with celebrities, a central psychological component of fandom. Hamilton, for instance, uses apparent signs of aggression to signify his empathy for Monroe's own self-criticism and objectification of herself, as an extension and internalization of audiences'

expectations of her celebrity *persona*. Hamilton's defacement of Monroe's image is therefore an equal expression of fandom, as is Quinn's literal deification of Moss. It has therefore been demonstrated in the main chapters of this analysis that although art by Mellor, Peyton, Dicke, Hamilton, Kilimnik and Vine trespasses and disobeys symbolic boundaries between fans and celebrities while hinting at potentially more profound violations in its allusions to stalking and defacing celebrities, these artists investigate their culpability in potentially destructive aspects of audience reception and use their work to question, not discredit, their fan feelings. As shown by the literature about the multidimensional nature of fans' emotional investment in celebrities, the contradictions and ambiguities demonstrate rather than discredit artists' fan identities.

### **3. What scholarly recognized elements of fandom do the principle artists display in their work?**

McGinley, Peyton, Kilimnik and Vine were selected as the subjects of this thesis because they exemplify the core components of fandom and they endeavour to maintain their fan status despite opportunities to transcend parasocial interactions and create interpersonal relationships with celebrities. Thus McGinley maintains boundaries between Morrissey and himself in order to express *amae*, or the pleasure of a hierarchical relationship between a fan and celebrity. His work depicting fellow Morrissey fans presents his identification with the rock star and his sense of belonging within a fan community as vehicles for exploring and expressing his personal identity, a dynamic which is recognized in theories of fandom by Sandvoss and Lewis. By contrast, Peyton appears to blur boundaries between herself, as a fan, and the celebrities she depicts by painting famous friends alongside celebrities beyond her social circle. However, her consistent use of photographs, rather than drawing from life, indicates that she also values the distance between a parasocial and interpersonal relationship with a celebrity, therefore her fandom also demonstrates the concept of *amae*.

Identification is another important aspect of fandom that unifies all four artists and defines their work. Peyton represents her identification with male celebrities by feminizing their faces and depicting their features as resembling her own. Kilimnik advances this expression of identification by mislabelling celebrities' images as self-

portraits. Her social reserve indicates a desire to maintain distance between herself and her subjects, while her elaborate fictional narratives involving celebrities indicate a rich fantasy of parasocial interactions. Vine, equally, articulates her strong sense of affinity for celebrities in her interviews and public statements. Her art presents these features through her selection of subjects with personal histories that resemble her publically known life-story, and her use of dolls as a prevailing metaphor for her celebrity subjects demonstrates her empathy for people experiencing the pressures of fame.

**4. In creating their art, how do the four central artists reject or embody prevalent cultural stereotypes (particularly pertaining to gender, class and mental health) concerning fans?**

Correspondences between artists' styles and cultural assumptions about their fandom are assessed in each chapter devoted to a single artist subject. Gender assumptions about fandom are explored through contrasts between work by male artists whose fandom is perceived as a mature reflection on their subject matter, as is the case with Graham's and Violette's mournful work about Cobain, Freud's admiring portrait of Moss and Quinn's gushing depictions of her, and work by women artists such as Peyton and Kilimnik that is critically disparaged as immature and regressive. The criticisms are presented as critiques of technique and style which set these artists apart in addition to their gender. More to the point, women artists expressing fandom are disparaged because their art is perceived as gendered – girlish – whereas male artists' fandom is taken more seriously.

These tropes also appear in critical interpretations of artists' work as regressive and adolescent. For example, Kilimnik's art lacks the technical sophistication that Peyton exhibits in her paintings and that McGinley demonstrates through his use of colour and composition. Peyton stylizes her subjects' physical appearances, whereas Kilimnik simplifies hers. This aesthetic decision, as well as the composition of Kilimnik's drawings and her singular attention to her celebrity subjects, has led critics to associate her work with art produced by adolescent fans. By contrast, McGinley's declaration of unity with fellow fans situates his fandom within a comfortable matrix of fan communities identified by psychologists Lynn E. McCutcheon, Rense Lange

and James Houran as a “healthy” form of fandom.<sup>645</sup> Kilimnik, however, presents her fan-based attachments as removed from social contexts and wholly constructed of fantasies, conflating her identity with her celebrity subjects’ personas. The most pronounced evidence of fan identification is found in her titles, which plainly merge her identity with that of her subjects.

Technical aspects of Kilimnik’s work may appear immature. However a regressive artistic *persona* is an accepted form of expression in contemporary art, as demonstrated by artists such as Mike Kelley and Tracey Emin whose subject matter falls outside the remit of this thesis.<sup>646</sup> In this chapter, it was argued that the critical equation of Kilimnik with fandom’s dangerous extreme is predicated on aesthetic and social prejudice. This is largely because through her biography and media persona, Kilimnik embodies negative stereotypes of fans as inarticulate and socially marginalized. From the chaotic presentation of her scatter art installations to her laconic self-presentation in the press, she personifies the qualities that Jensen identified as stigmatizing fans and fandom.<sup>647</sup> These visual and narrative elements in Kilimnik’s art can answer the principal research questions in this thesis. Her art exemplifies Sandvoss’s assertion that fandom is predicated on identification, not only on admiration or adoration. The qualities in Kilimnik’s art that critics correctly identify as “girlish” represent her internalization of fandom’s gendered cultural image, as was discussed by Ehrenreich and her co-authors in Chapter One. Her self-determined isolation from the mainstream art community complies with Jensen’s assertion that fans are culturally conceived to be “suffering from a disease of isolation.”<sup>648</sup> This chapter, however, proposed that Kilimnik’s reluctance to form interpersonal relationships with her subjects might represent a desire to maintain her fandom through the principle of *amae*, and is not necessarily a symptom of an anti-social personality.

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<sup>645</sup> L. McCutcheon, L. E. Rense Lange and J. Houran, ‘Conceptualization and Measurement of Celebrity Worship’, *British Journal of Psychology* 93, no. 1 (2002), 67-87.

<sup>646</sup> See: L. Kauffman, *Bad Girls and Sick Boys: Fantasies in Contemporary Art and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>647</sup> J. Jensen, ‘Fandom as Pathology’, 13.

<sup>648</sup> J. Jensen, ‘Fandom as Pathology’, 13.

**5. When artists address their subjects using an overtly emotional and subjective aesthetic associated with fandom, what is the effect on an audience's perception of their work and critical interpretation of their art?**

This thesis argues that while artists whose work expresses the emotional aspect which is integral to fandom might become commercially successful, their work is vulnerable to critical dismissal. As Grant writes, "To be a fan of something often indicates an over-attachment, an excessive engagement that goes beyond the intellectual."<sup>649</sup> Therefore, critics evaluate artists whose engagement with pop-culture source material is ambiguous and whose aesthetic choices are detached as having greater intellectual credibility. Comparisons between the critical reception of Peyton's art depicting Cobain and art by Violette and Graham about Cobain in Chapter III demonstrated that Peyton's art is often dismissed as adolescent and superficial because she employs an overtly emotional and subjective aesthetic whereas the others express their fan affinities with apparent objectivity and aesthetic reserve. Comparisons between critical views of Kilimnik's art and work by Dicke and Quinn in Chapter IV similarly presented evidence supporting the observation that blatant expressions of fandom and fannish identification are stigmatized in contemporary art while subtler manifestations are critically accepted. Because fandom is culturally perceived as an uncomplicated and therefore uncritical form of media engagement, it is disparaged, and artists who seek to have their work appeal to serious critics may mute or disguise evidence of fandom. This stance allows artists who adopt a reserved aesthetic to avoid being drawn into disputes about audiences' potentially destructive impact on celebrities and their complex desires for celebrities to reflect their own vulnerabilities and identities, as seen with all four principle artists.

**6. Do artists' admissions of fan feelings for their subjects influence the evaluation of their work on those subjects?**

An artist's admission and expression of fandom is a pervasive window into his or her work because fandom indicates a sincere emotional investment in pop-culture material, rather than one that is cynical or detached. Whereas art theorist David McNeill argues that sincerity is a concept drained of meaning in postmodern culture,

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<sup>649</sup> C. Grant, 'Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-wave Feminism in Contemporary Art', *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 2 (2011), 265.

and therefore “[w]hile a romantic or expressionist artist’s sincerity might once have been of paramount importance, to ponder whether Andy Warhol was sincere when he painted ... would be to miss the point,”<sup>650</sup> this thesis presents an artist’s emotional investment in his or her subject as central to the artwork’s meaning, impact and resonance.

Accepting and responding to an artist’s sincerity is especially important when engaging with work about the potentially destructive impact of fame on celebrities. An artist’s fan status can enrich his or her artworks by offering insight into the complex relationship between celebrities and their public. When creating work about celebrities who appear to have suffered from their public status, such as Cobain, the artists’ aesthetic choices can distance them from direct involvement in engaging with the celebrities’ personal pain because they remove evidence of strong emotion from their work.<sup>651</sup> This might seem to be the case with Violette’s work on Corbain. However, although he appears detached, and his statements rely on detached language to intellectually reflect on the rock star’s cultural significance, as shown in Chapter IV, his articulation of a subjective emotional attachment to and strong feelings of identification with Cobain deepen the meaning of his artistic engagement with his subject because his work becomes a personal investigation into the nature of his fandom and the insight it offers into his self-image. However, his emotionally removed style confuses the relationship between his art and his fan identity for audience whereas Peyton creates confrontationally personal and subjective art as expressed through her tactile paint application, romantic representation of her subjects, idealization of their appearances and distinctive alterations to her subjects’ facial features. This work implicates her in a complicated and controversial relationship between a celebrity and his audience, instead of positioning her as a critical and objective commentator.

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<sup>650</sup> D. McNeill, ‘Putting Sincerity to Work: Acquiescence and Refusal in Post-Fordist Art’, in *The Rhetoric of Sincerity* E. van Alphen, M. Bal and C. Smith (eds) (Stanford: Stanford University, 2009), 157.

<sup>651</sup> C. Lumby, ‘Vanishing point’, *Planet Diana: Cultural Studies and Global Mourning* (Sydney: University of West Sydney Press, 1997); R. Johnson, ‘Exemplary Differences: mourning (and not mourning) a princess’, in A. Kear and D.L. Steinberg, eds., *Mourning Diana: Nation, Culture and the Performance of Grief* (London: Routledge, 2002), 15-40.

When artists approach fandom as outsiders, as is the case with Collins, Gordon and Breitz, their public admission of fan feelings can enhance an understanding of their work, although it can also raise fruitful questions about why they have selected artistic approaches that distance them from their subject matter. Thus, although Collins admits affinity with the fans in his video series, his work is created from a detached, analytic perspective that leaves his personal feelings for Morrissey a mystery. This thesis proposes that one of the factors in Collin's choice of approach, which compels him to create a different kind of work than McGinley, is the negative image of fans in popular culture. McGinley should, therefore, be appreciated for addressing the stigma attached to fandom, as well as revealing an intimate aspect of his personal identity for his own admirers.

### **Final Thoughts**

The four artists at the heart of this thesis are fans who use images of the celebrities they admire to express aspects of their own identities. Their identification with celebrities enables them to use their fandom as a form of self-portraiture by proxy. This relationship with pop-culture subject matter reflects other fans' engagement with celebrities, according to theorists such as Sandvoss, Jenkins, Fiske and Grant, who assert that fandom is a means for individuals to construct, understand and express their identities in contemporary society. As Sandvoss argues, fandom is a form of self-reflection since the object of fandom serves the fan as an extension of the self.<sup>652</sup> Because fandom serves this significant social function, its manifestation and representation in contemporary art is interesting and worthy of further scholarly investigation. It is hoped that this thesis has shown the fruitfulness of bringing together two academic disciplines – modern fan studies and art criticism – which have not been related before but, when combined, provide a solid ground for understanding the complex dynamic between celebrity culture and contemporary art.

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<sup>652</sup> C. Sandvoss, *Fans*.

## IMAGES



**Figure 1**  
Ryan McGinley  
*Untitled*  
2003  
Chromogenic print  
h. 20 x w. 16 in



**Figure 2**  
Ryan McGinley  
*Dan and Eric*  
2001  
Chromogenic print on mounted aluminium  
h. 30 x w. 40 in



**Figure 3**

Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 1)*

2004–6

Chromogenic print

h. 17 × w. 23 1/2 in.



**Figure 4**

Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 2)*

2004–6

Chromogenic print

h. 17 × w. 23 1/2 in.



**Figure 5**

Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 3)*

2004–6

Chromogenic print

h. 17 × w. 23 1/2 in.



**Figure 6**

Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 4)*

2004–6

Chromogenic print

h. 17 × w. 23 1/2 in.



**Figure 7**

Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 5)*

2004-6

Chromogenic print

h. 17 × w. 23 1/2 in.



**Figure 8**

Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 6)*

2004–6

Chromogenic print

h. 17 × w. 23 1/2 in.



**Figure 9**  
Ryan McGinley  
*Untitled (Morrissey 7)*  
2005  
Chromogenic-print  
h. 46 x w. 65 in.



**Figure 10**

Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 8)*

2006

Chromogenic print

h. 72 x w. 48 in.



**Figure 11**

Ryan McGinley  
*Untitled (Morrissey 9)*  
2004–6  
Chromogenic print  
h. 72 x w. 48 in.



**Figure 12**  
Ryan McGinley  
*Untitled (Morrissey 10)*  
2004–6  
Chromogenic print  
h. 72 x w. 48 in.



**Figure 13**

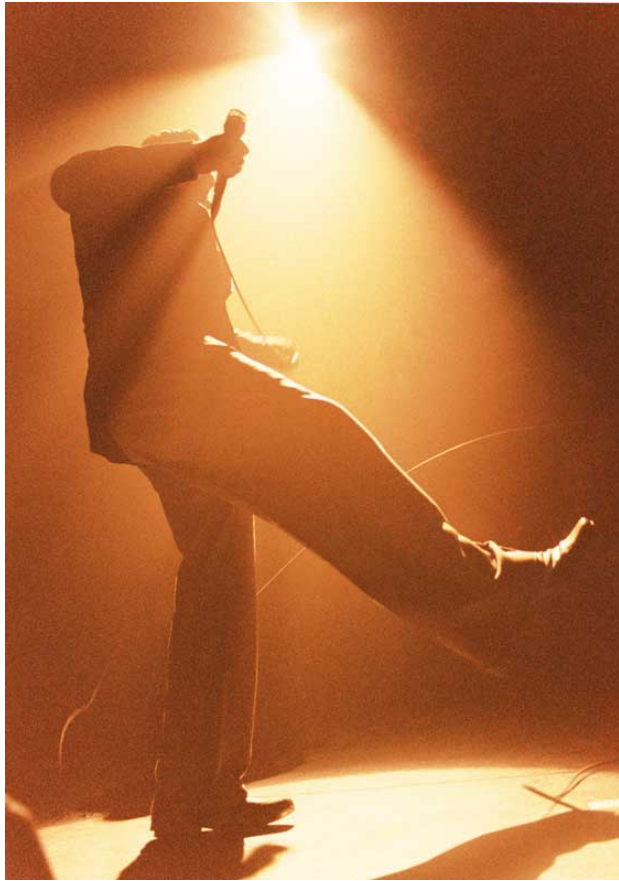
Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 11)*

2004–6

Chromogenic print

h. 72 x w. 48 in.



**Figure 14**

Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 12)*

2004–6

Chromogenic print on mounted aluminium

h: 30 x w: 40 in.



**Figure 15**

Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 13)*

2004–6

Chromogenic print on mounted aluminium

h: 30 x w: 40 in.



**Figure 16**  
Ryan McGinley  
*Untitled (Morrissey 15)*  
2006  
C-print  
h. 38 x w. 28 in.



**Figure 17**  
Ryan McGinley  
*Untitled (Morrissey 16)*  
2006  
Chromogenic print  
h. 17 × w. 23 ½ in.



**Figure 18**

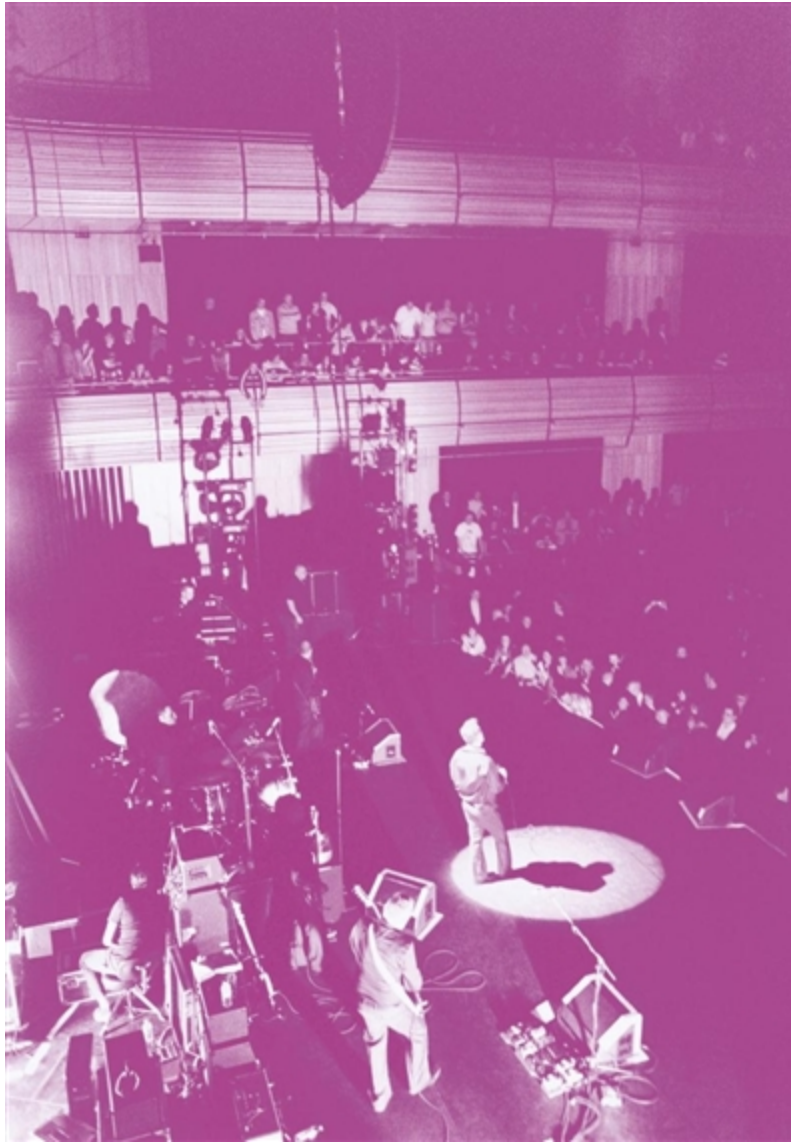
Ryan McGinley

*Untitled (Morrissey 17)*

2004–6

Chromogenic print on mounted aluminium

h. 30 x w. 40 in.



**Figure 19**  
Ryan McGinley  
*Untitled (Morrissey 20)*  
2006  
Chromogenic print  
h. 72 x w. 48 in



**Figure 20**  
Ryan McGinley  
*Kiss Explosion*  
2005  
Chromogenic Print  
h. 16 x w.16 in.



**Figure 21**  
Phil Collins  
Still from *The World Won't Listen*  
2005  
Single-channel colour video projection with audio  
58 minutes



**Figure 22**  
Phil Collins  
Still from *The World Won't Listen*  
2005  
Single-channel colour video projection with audio  
58 minutes



**Figure 23**  
Phil Collins  
Still from *The World Won't Listen*  
2005  
Single-channel colour video projection with audio  
58 minutes



**Figure 24**  
Candice Breitz  
*Still from King (A Portrait of Michael Jackson)*  
2005  
30-channel installation  
73 minutes 30 seconds



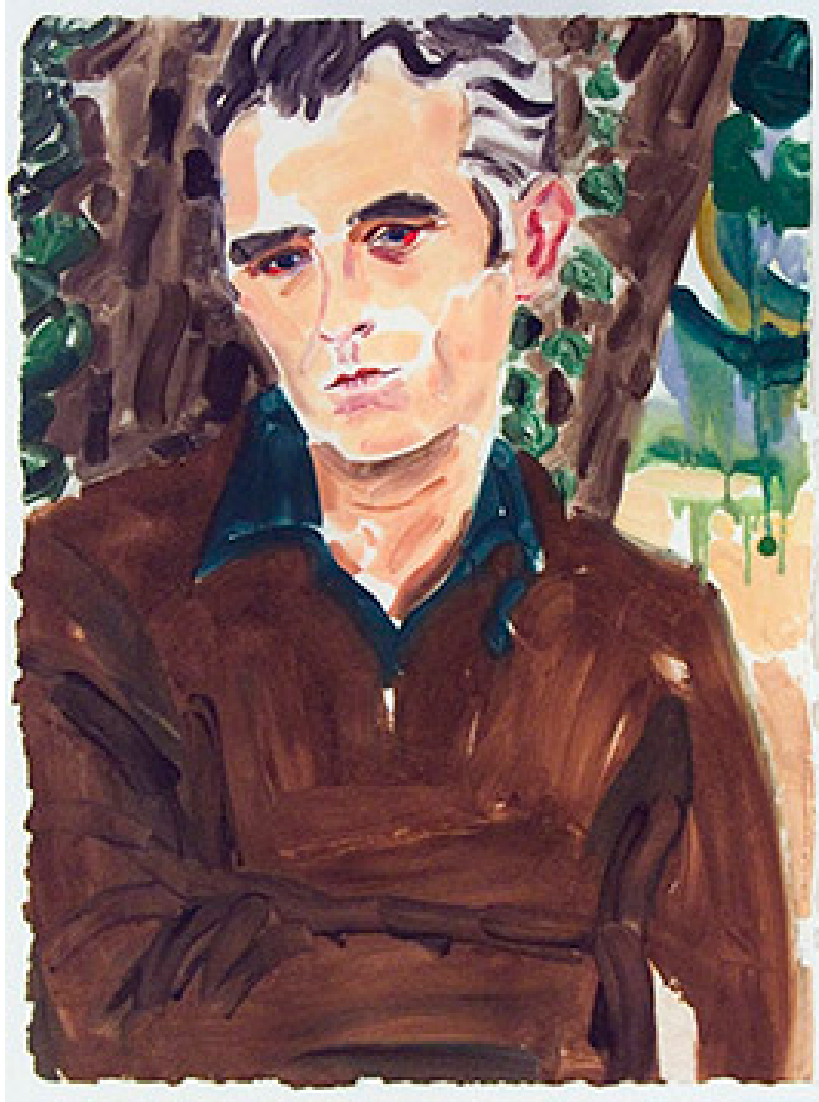
**Figure 25**  
Candice Breitz  
Still from *Queen (A Portrait of Madonna)*  
2005  
30-channel installation  
73 minutes 30 seconds



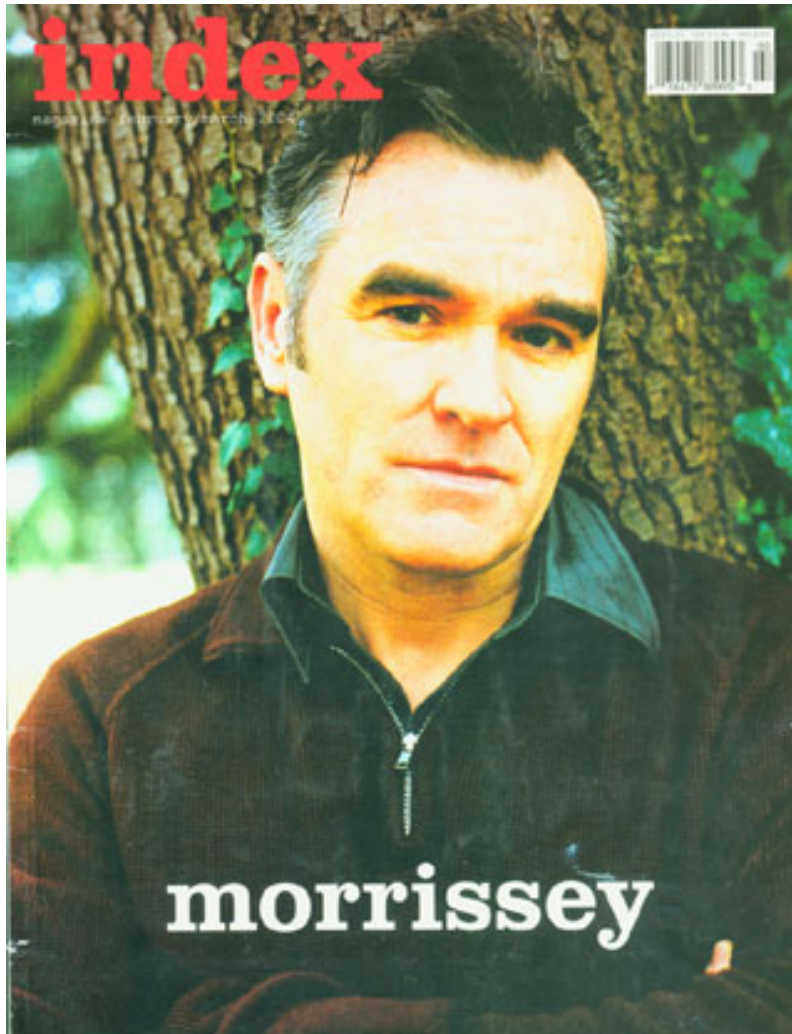
**Figure 26**  
Elizabeth Peyton  
*Live to Ride (E.P.)*  
2003  
Oil on board  
h. 15 x w. 12 in.



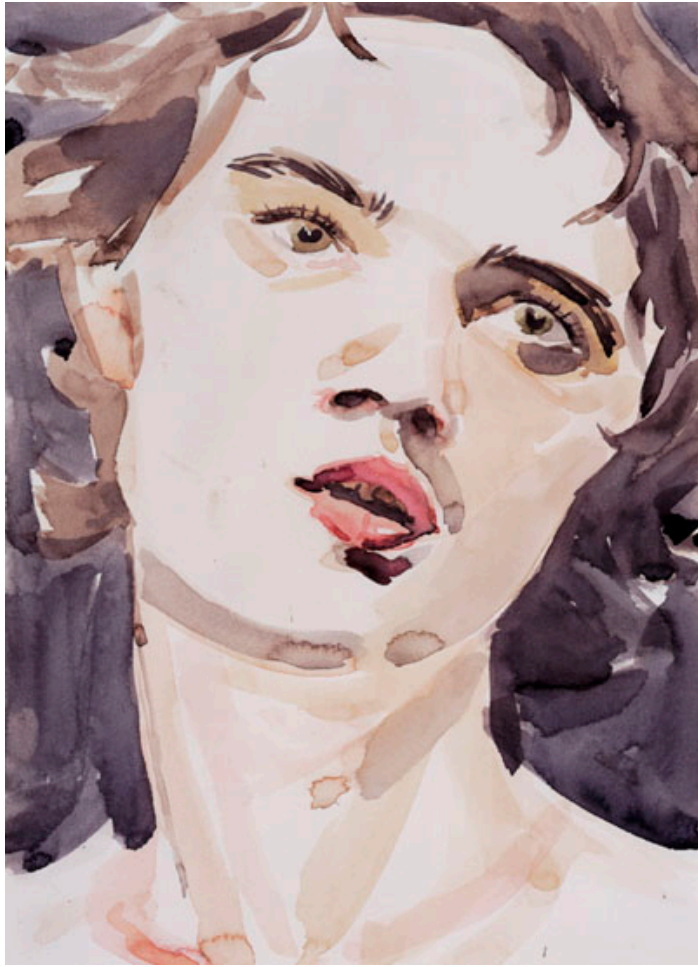
**Figure 27**  
Elizabeth Peyton  
*Blue Liam*  
1996  
Oil on board  
h. 17 x w. 14 in.



**Figure 28**  
Elizabeth Peyton  
*Morrissey after Wolfgang*  
2004  
monotype on handmade paper  
h. 30 x w. 22 in.



**Figure 29**  
Wolfgang Tilmans  
*Index magazine* (cover)  
February/ March 2004



**Figure 30**  
Elizabeth Peyton  
*Pete (Pete Doherty)*  
2005  
watercolour on paper  
h.14 x w.10 in.



**Figure 31**  
Elizabeth Peyton  
*Craig*  
1997  
Oil on canvas  
h. 14 x w. 17 in.



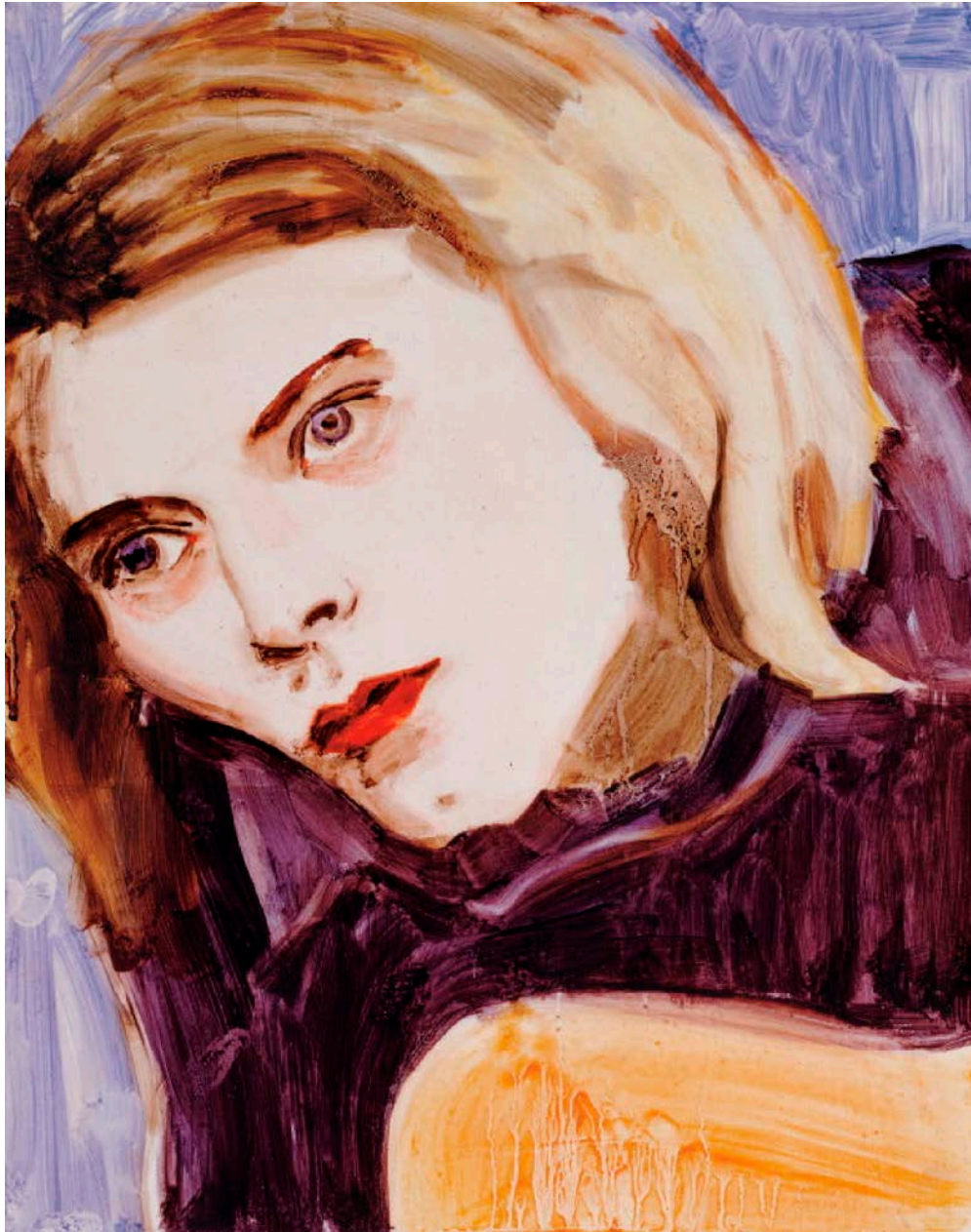
**Figure 32**  
Andy Warhol  
*From Marilyn*  
1967  
Screenprint on paper  
h. 35 x w. 35 in.



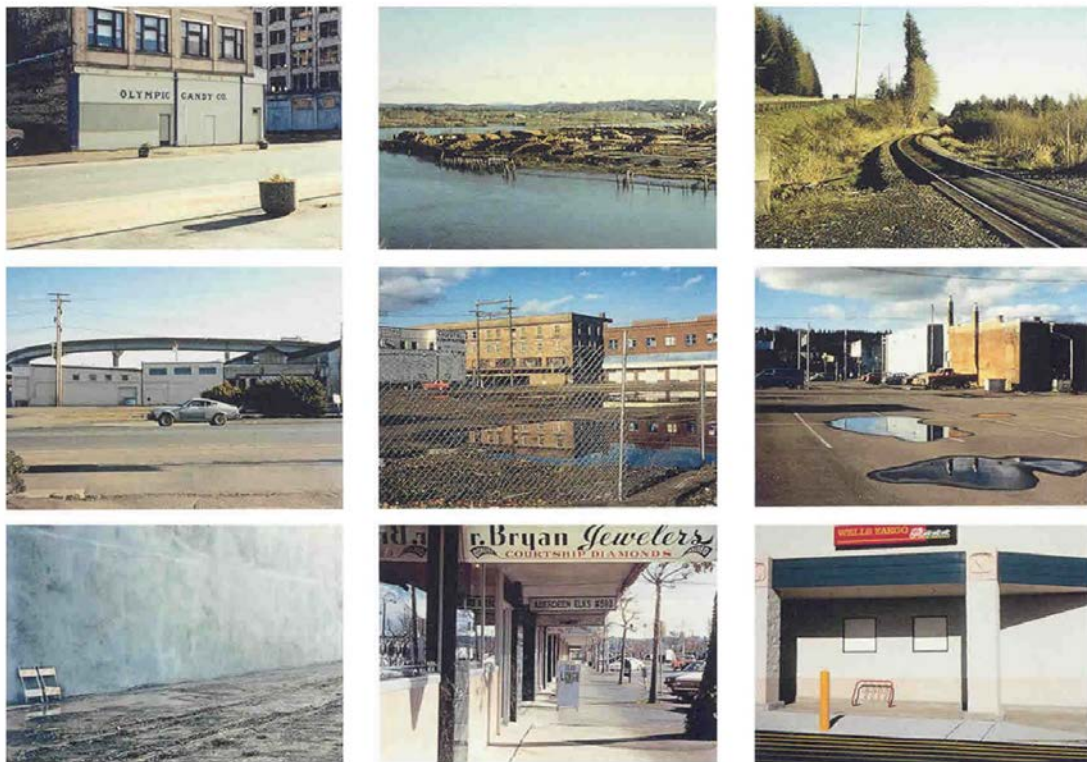
**Figure 33**  
Andy Warhol  
*Marilyn Diptych*  
1962  
Acrylic paint on canvas  
h.80 x w. 57 in.



**Figure 34**  
Elizabeth Peyton  
*Kurt Smoking*  
Oil on Masonite  
h. 12 x w. 9 inches



**Figure 35**  
Elizabeth Peyton  
*Kurt*  
1995  
oil on board  
h. 25.4 x w. 20.3 cm.



**Figure 36**  
Rodney Graham  
Aberdeen  
2000  
Slide, 35 mm, 80 slides, projection, colour and sound (stereo)  
Dimensions/duration: 20 min overall display dimensions variable



**Figure 37**  
Banks Violette  
*Kill all Rock Stars (Kurt Cobain)*  
2002  
Graphite on paper.  
h.22 x w.29 1/4 in.



**Figure 38**  
Karen Kilimnik  
*Me as Elizabeth Taylor in National Velvet Before Horse Race*  
1988  
C-print  
h. 17 x w. 21 in.'



**Figure 39**

Karen Kilimnik

Recreation of *Switzerland, the Pink Panther & Peter Sellers & Boris & Natasha & Gelsey Kirkland in Siberia*

(original) 1991, (recreation) 2007

Mixed-media installation



**Figure 40**  
Karen Kilimnik  
*Kate Moss with Sparkles*  
1993  
Graphite, glitter, oil stick on paper  
h. 12 x w. 12 in.



**Figure 41**  
Kate Garner  
*Kate Moss*  
1993  
Digital Print, with Diamond Dust on paper  
h. 25.5 x w. 18.5 in.



**Figure 42**  
Karen Kilimnik  
*CK*  
1993  
Wax crayon and synthetic polymer on paper  
h. 35 1/8 × w. 22 7/16 in.



**Figure 43**  
Karen Kilimnik  
*Indelible*  
1997  
Crayon on paper  
h. 40 x w. 26 in.



**Figure 44**  
 Karen Kilimnik  
*New York Outfit I Want*  
 1990  
 Crayon, Pencil and Acrylic on Paper  
 h. 35 x w. 23 in.



**Figure 45**  
Karen Kilimnik  
*Marie Antoinette Out for a Walk at Her Petite Hermitage, France, 1750*  
2005  
Water-soluble oil color on canvas  
h. 20 x w. 16 in.



**Figure 46**

Karen Kilimnik

*Me—I Forgot the Wire Cutters Getting the Wire Cutters from the Car to Break into Stonehenge, 1982*  
1998

water soluble oil color on canvas

h. 16 x w. 20 in.

Collection: Nina and Frank Moore



**Figure 47**  
Kate Moss photographed by Mario Testino in 1998 for *Vogue Russia*



**Figure 48**  
Karen Kilimnik  
Me in Russia, 1916, Outside the Village  
1999  
Water-based oil on canvas  
h.20 x w.24 in.



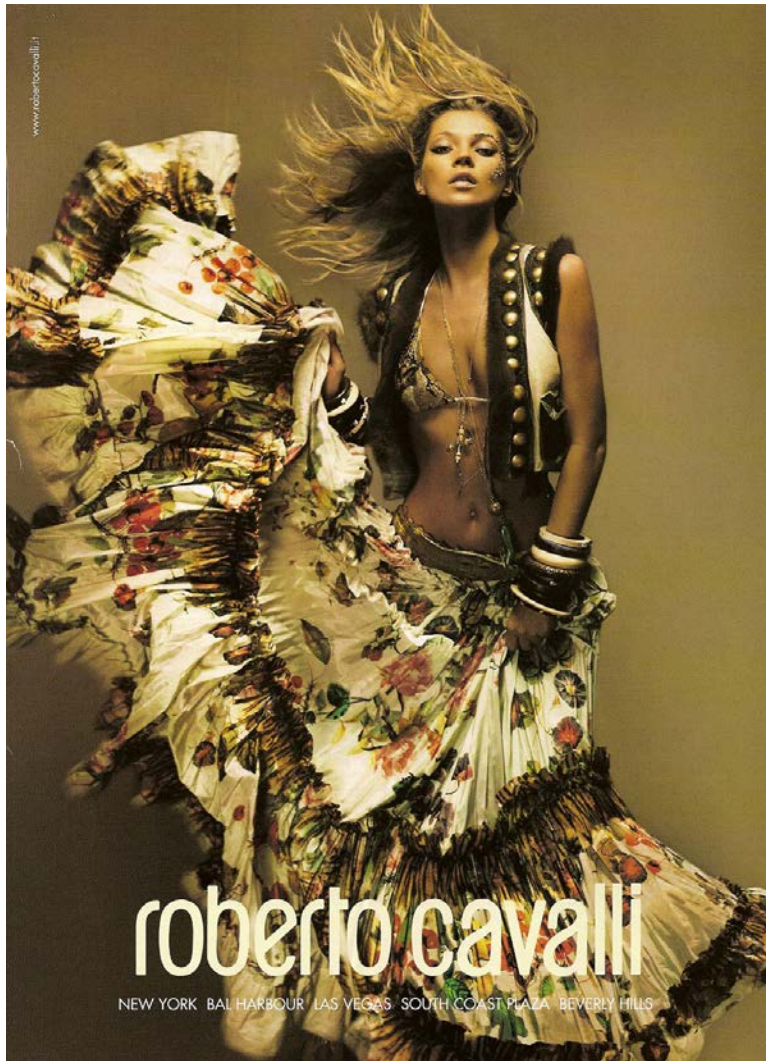
**Figure 49**  
Lucian Freud  
*Naked Portrait*  
2002  
Oil on canvas  
h. 60 x w. 48 in.



**Figure 50**  
Amie Dicke  
*Oooh Kate*  
2003  
Cut-out, ink on magazine paper  
h. 120 x w. 75 cm



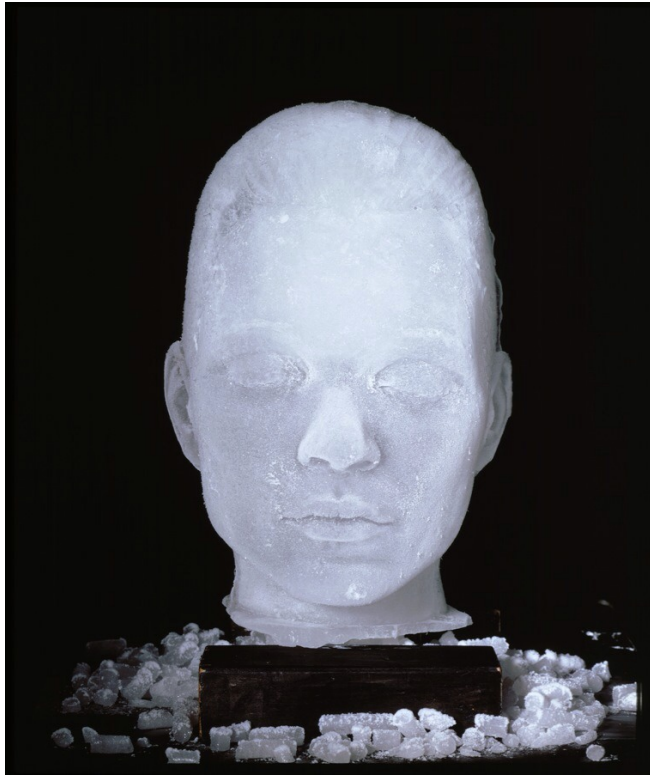
**Figure 51**  
Amie Dicke  
*Overview*  
2005  
Cut-out, ink on magazine paper  
h. 120 x w. 75 cm



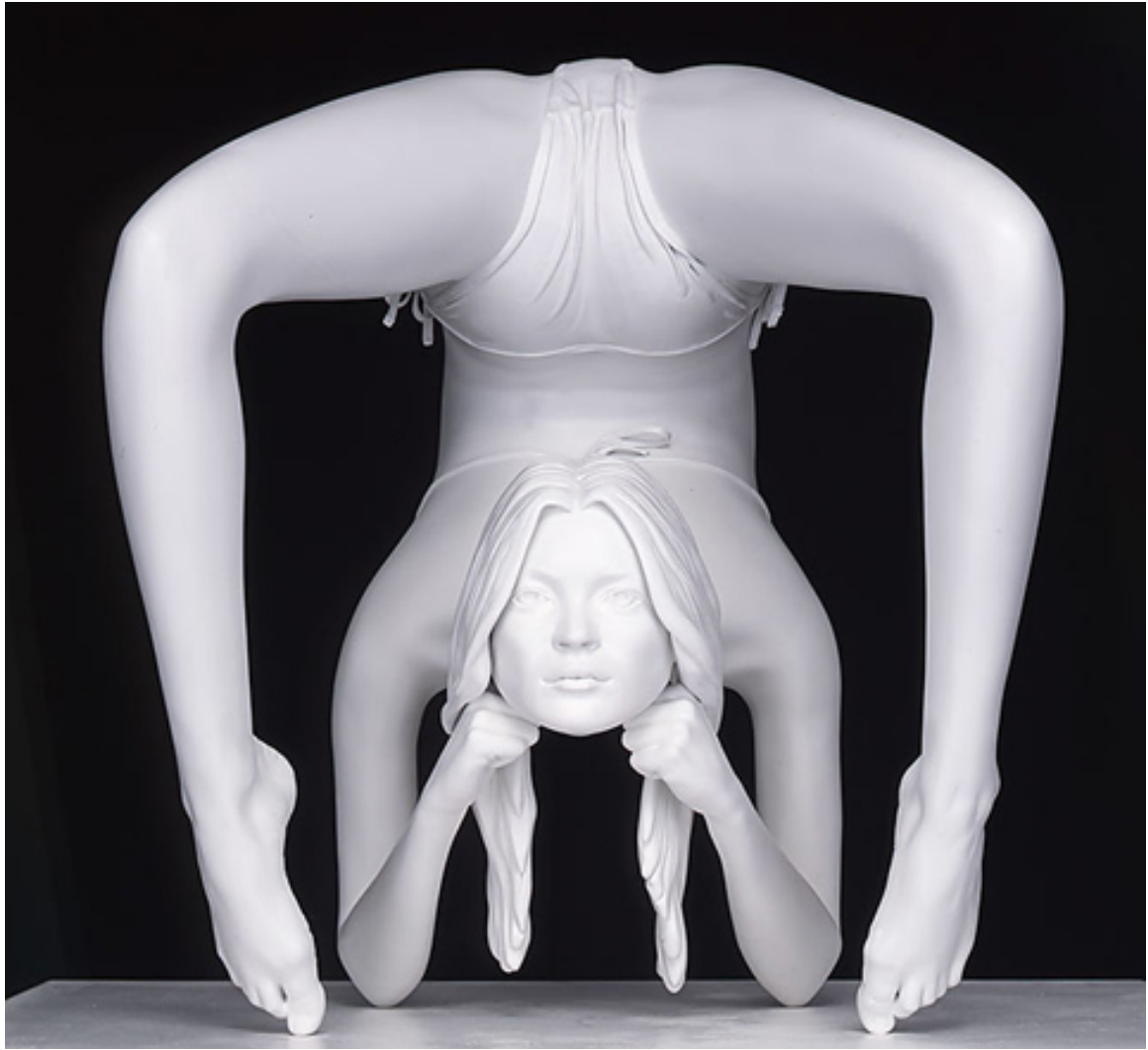
**Figure 52**  
Advertisement for Roberto Cavalli, Spring/Summer 2008 collection



**Figure 53**  
Amie Dicke  
*Scandaleuse*  
2006  
Magazine and various nails  
h. 120 x w. 75 cm.



**Figure 54**  
Marc Quinn  
*Beauty*  
2002  
Ice



**Figure 55**

Marc Quinn

*Microcosmos - Fortuna*

2008

Painted bronze

h. 30 x w. 24 x d. 27 cm.



**Figure 56**

Marc Quinn

*Sphinx "Fortuna"*

2006

18ct gold

h. 88 x w. 65 x d. 50 cm.



**Figure 57**

Marc Quinn

*Sphinx (Road to Enlightenment)*

2006

Glass beaded and lacquered bronze

h. 34.5 x w. 33 x d. 20 cm.



**Figure 58**  
Stella Vine  
Hi Paul can you come over?  
2003  
Oil on board  
h. 21 x w. 23 in.



**Figure 59**  
Stella Vine  
Rachel  
2004  
Oil on board  
36 inches diameter



**Figure 60**  
Stella Vine  
Murdered, Pregrant, Embalmed  
2005  
Acrylic on canvas  
h. 60 x w. 72 in.



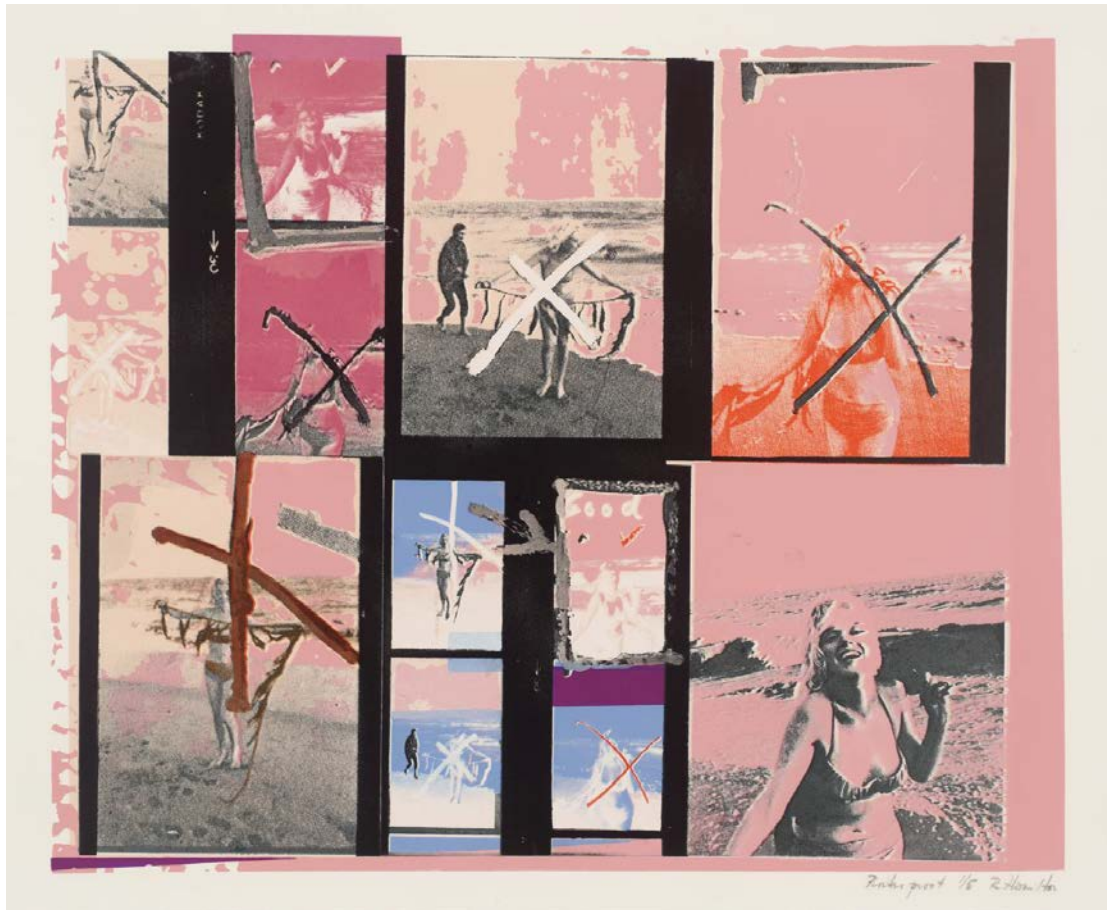
**Figure 61**  
Stella Vine  
*Holy water cannot help you now*  
2005  
Acrylic on canvas  
h. 72 x w. 84 in.



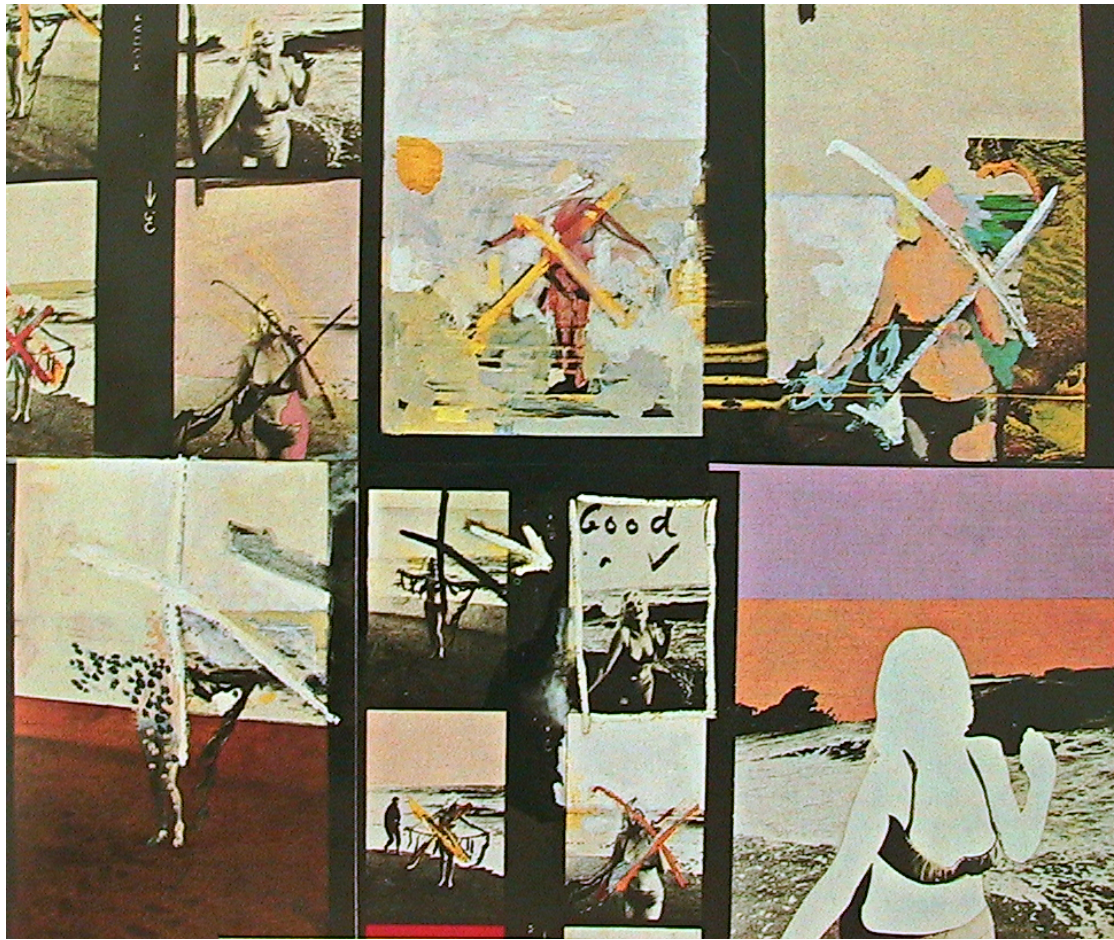
**Figure 62**  
Stella Vine  
*I Only Make Love to Jesus*  
2005  
Acrylic on canvas  
h. 72 x w. 84 in.



**Figure 63**  
Stella Vine  
*Kate M*  
2011  
acrylic on canvas  
h. 12 x w. 24 in.



**Figure 64**  
Richard Hamilton  
*My Marilyn*  
1965  
Screenprint on paper  
h. 518 x w. 632 mm.



**Figure 65**

Richard Hamilton

*My Marilyn*

1965

Screenprint on paper

h. 518 x w. 632 mm.

Collection: Stadt Aachen, Ludwig Forum für internationale Kunst



**Figure 66**  
Douglas Gordon  
*Self-Portrait of You + Me (Six Marylins)*  
2008  
h. 30 x w. 60 in.



**Figure 67**

Douglas Gordon

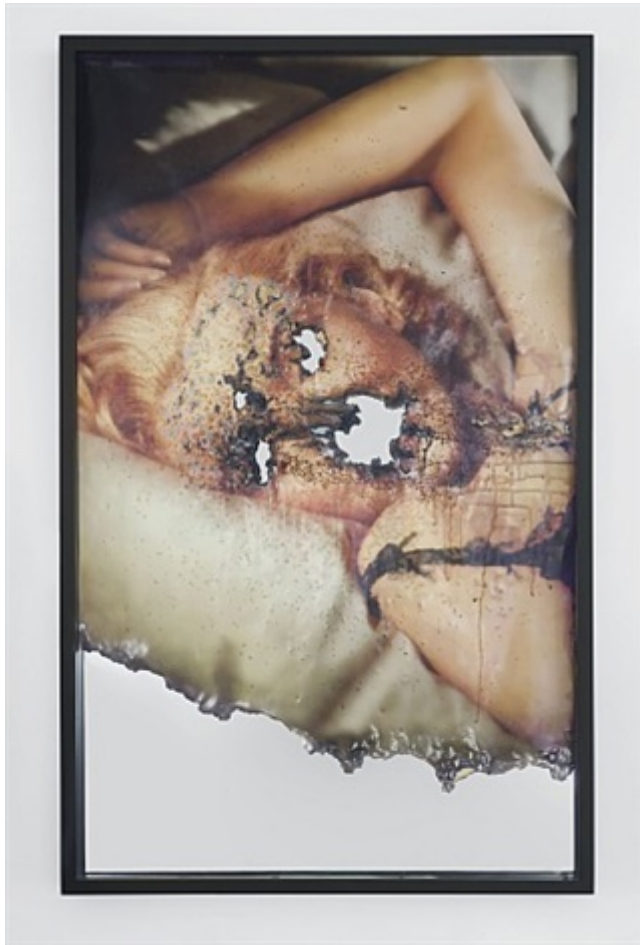
*Blind James (white)*

2002

Gelatin silver print on paper mounted onto board

h. 610 x w. 653 mm.

Collection: Tate, London



**Figure 68**  
Douglas Gordon  
*Self Portrait of You + Me (Marilyn 5)*  
2008  
Photograph, Mixed Media, Burned Print, Smoke and Mirror  
h. 102 x w. 63.5 cm.  
Collection: Yvon Lambert Inventory



**Figure 69**  
Dawn Mellor  
*Catherine Deneuve*  
2005  
Oil on canvas  
h. 108 x w. 133 in.



**Figure 70**  
Dawn Mellor  
*The Librarians*  
2005  
Oil on Canvas  
h. 72 x w. 84 in.



**Figure 71**  
Dawn Mellor  
*Surrender Dorothy*  
2007  
Oil on canvas  
h. 72 x w. 84 in.

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