

Bufferin Commercial

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Bufferin Commercial refers in its title to a widely available brand of aspirin. The film is also typical of some of Warhol's filmmaking practices in 1966 and, I will argue, anticipates Warhol's philosophy on relations between business and art. In addition to offering some commentary on this relatively unknown film I also want to use *Bufferin Commercial* to explore some possible ways to explain and account for those filmmaking practices that Warhol described circa 1966 as being deliberately bad; Warhol pretended to be both incompetent and curious about the process of making films and even made a statement on network television advocating 'bad camerawork.'¹ *Bufferin Commercial* shouldn't be confused with the other *Bufferin* (1966), the portrait film Warhol made in collaboration with Gerard Malanga and the subject of Jean Wainwright's chapter in this volume. *Bufferin Commercial* is comprised of two 1200 foot thirty-three minute reels. The first reel is without sound (an unintentional accident) and the second reel has sound. There is some uncertainty surrounding the film's projection history as being either a single screen 66 minute film, listed as 70 minutes in *The Filmmaker's Cooperative Catalogue No.4* (1967), or a double screen projection that would be 33 minutes in duration.² It was filmed on Wednesday, 14 December 1966 with two cameras that ran simultaneously, one of them operated by Warhol and the other by Paul Morrissey. *Bufferin Commercial's* absence from commentary on Warhol's films may be due to it being one of the few of his sixties films that was an outside agency commission organised by Richard Frank from the Grey advertising agency in New York on behalf of the pharmaceutical company Bristol-Myers. Frank was Grey's television and radio producer and his relationship to Warhol goes back to when he was working as production staff on *The Today Show* (NBC 1952-). Frank vividly recalls the production of *Bufferin Commercial*:

The concept, which I proposed to Warhol, and that he accepted, was to make a film of his choosing - any length, any subject, any number of people. This was to be done in front of a live audience of ad executives and creative types.

The only limitation was time. He [Warhol] was given two hours and went over by a half hour. There was to be no censorship or control of any kind as far as I was concerned. There were to be no limits on his creativity. He was to go wherever he wanted to. He asked, though, if there was a product that he could use as his subject. The agency selected Bufferin. The sponsor was not involved at this point in any way. We agreed that in lieu of payment he would receive raw stock, processing, any equipment necessary and one print that could be used any way he chose. But we also agreed that the product was not to be used as a title or to promote the film. Grey would be allowed to have a print that could be constructed into a test "Andy Warhol Commercial". He used the name Bufferin and that is what got us all in trouble. Grey let what may be considered now the most influential artist of the 20th century slip through their doors.³

Only two reversal prints of *Bufferin Commercial* were made and there was no original negative. The Warhol film collection only includes a print of each of the reels, suggesting that the camera reversal original disappeared with Bristol-Myers.⁴ Warhol did not put the film in circulation like the other better-known films from the same period. However, there is at least one piece of evidence that *Bufferin Commercial* had a single screening: two adverts placed in an issue of the *Village Voice* from 16 March 1967.⁵ The film was projected at The Dom as part of the multi-screen backdrops for the EPI (Exploding Plastic Inevitable) happenings. The *Village* advert refers to *Bufferin Commercial* as 'a film with Mario Montez' under the larger billing of 'Andy Warhol presents Nico singing songs of the Velvet Underground' although *Bufferin Commercial* does not present Mario Montez in a starring role. This was likely the only exhibition of *Bufferin Commercial* other than undocumented private Factory screenings or a showing on one of the college tours.

Bufferin Commercial's first reel begins with an unidentifiable visual strobing effect that turns out to be a close-up of the noise on a television screen. The camera zooms back to reveal a group of people sitting around talking and laughing. Mary Woronov is circulating among them holding a microphone and tape recorder slung over her shoulder. She is interviewing a group of Factory

regulars and hipsters from 1966, eleven in total, including familiar faces Gerard Malanga, Mario Montez, Jane Holzer, Ivy Nicholson, Rona Page, Ultra Violet, Jackson Allen, and Rod La Rod in a pirate costume. The camera moves about on the tripod, zooming in and out of faces, many in tight close-up, especially of boys and their well-maintained hair. In several moments Malanga stares directly into the camera. The camera frequently tilts up and down and pans from left to right in a wild mode that could be characterised as peripatetic, a wandering and roving camera technique. The second reel has sound and begins with a close-up of the same flickering un-tuned noise on the television screen, more or less a repeat of reel one, but this time the microphone picks up the sound of the television before it turns back to the group and their voices, and conversation is finally revealed. What we hear is a discussion of the over-the-counter drug Bufferin and Gerard Malanga laughs as he suggests taking the drug anally. The camera does a 360° pan on the tripod while the talk is still focused on drugs and the apparent effects of Bufferin which 'gives you energy' and 'stops you being depressed'. Never once is Bufferin discussed legitimately as a cure for generic aches and pains. During its roving, when it is not focussed on someone's face, the camera frequently finds itself back on the television screen and the conversations can be heard as off-screen sound along with a grating amplified noise picked up by the shotgun mike. In a rare moment we actually hear Warhol talk in this film and he responds to a question asked off-screen that he hasn't taken Bufferin himself. The second reel ends with a reflexive nod to Pop Art through a close-up of a box of Bufferin tablets on a table that is fixed long enough for us to make the obvious visual connection to the *Brillo Soap Pads Box* (1964) sculptures. In addition to the stylistic features of *Bufferin Commercial's* peripatetic mode, the wild zooming and panning, the deliberate inclusion of the silent reel one, and the play of on-screen and off-screen sound, the film also exhibits some familiar Warholian tropes: the aesthetic investment in the beautiful face carried over as a theme from the conceptual series *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys* (1964-1966); the subversion of the interview format; television as object and experience; product advertising and product design familiar from commercial art; and the centrality of drugs to the Factory's social and artistic milieu.

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Bufferin Commercial challenges the idea of Warhol as a non-commercial filmmaker in a period when the films were often understood and promoted, for example by Henry Geldzahler as Warhol's spokesperson, as anti-commercial on both a formal and thematic level.⁶ Therefore, and despite the erratic camerawork and druggy talk, I want to consider *Bufferin Commercial* as an early film example of Warhol's concept of 'business art'. In what is one of Warhol's most frequently cited philosophies he writes:

Business art is the step that comes after Art. I started as a commercial artist, and I want to finish as a business artist. After I did the thing called "art" or whatever it's called, I went into business art. I wanted to be an Art Businessman or a Business Artist. Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. ... making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art.⁷

Writing in 1975 in the midst of a busy period of commissioned portraits Warhol could make this claim, but back in 1966 *Bufferin Commercial* was really a failure as 'good business' since despite being used as a test 'Andy Warhol Commercial' it never brought any immediate commissions for television commercials. Yet, from another perspective, the film succeeds at being 'the best art' through its focus on a specific set of transitional and exploratory non-static camera techniques. Callie Angell makes the keen observation that Warhol's 'failures are sometimes his most interesting work, because that's when you get a chance to see him thinking' and *Bufferin Commercial* is one of those interesting failures in which Warhol is clearly thinking through changes in his filmmaking style and exhibition practices.⁸

Bufferin Commercial's formal tendencies deliberately eschew any obvious tropes of the so-called 'good filmmaking' of Hollywood's classical paradigm where devices like zooms and close-ups are motivated by narrative, editing is the means to organise coherent or invisible temporal and spatial relations, and effacement of the camera's presence is chief among all aims. In an anecdote from Ronald Tavel, he recounts that Rodger Trudeau hugged Edie Sedgwick on the set of *Kitchen* (1965) and told her it was just like a Hollywood movie.⁹ Warhol

balked at the thought and instead wanted a 'sloppy, offhand, garbagy look.'¹⁰ *Bufferin Commercial* corresponds to Warhol's self-described and promoted 'bad filmmaking' and his anti-Hollywood style is embodied by the wandering camera that is perpetually present through an excess of zooms, tilts, and pans that appear to lack motivation. 'Never has a zoom been so gratuitously abused' writes one critic reviewing *Camp* (1965) in *Artforum*.¹¹ This style of filmmaking, which is also a departure from the minimalism that dominated 1964, foregrounds to the extreme Warhol's authorial presence behind the camera, as well as demonstrating the control he exerted over his films despite what the bad filmmaking rhetoric might otherwise suggest. In other words, the zooms, tilts, and pans are motivated by art rather than narration. Patrick Smith also identifies the unmotivated zooms, or 'Zooming as Zooming', as one of the key stylistic tropes of Warhol's filmmaking (the others are the static camera, the long take, and the strobe cut).¹²

Although caution needs to be observed when making any sweeping generalisations about Warhol's filmmaking practices in any given year, there is a noticeable transformation in his filmmaking throughout 1966: in quite a number of the films there is a decisive shift away from the camera being in the thrall of the superstar to being something of interest in itself, or engaging with objects in the *mise en scène* that Warhol suggests are worthy of our interest. The camera's unpredictability as it careens away or fixes on random objects usurps the superstar's screen magnetism and demand of the camera's attention. Thus we see the development of a sort of anti-portrait film. Warhol's camera focuses on anything other than the superstar and the camera appears to randomly shift away as if bored and disinterested as an echo of his own performances of boredom and insouciance. Kelly Cresap has written about the many facets of Warhol as the great pretender and his performance of self-conscious naivety that seems at various moments a framing that could potentially be applied to some of his filmmaking.¹³ At other times Warhol pretended to know nothing about cinema. In the 1967 *Superartist* documentary, for instance, knowing full well the critical comparisons being drawn, he feigns ignorance when he says 'Edison, is he a moviemaker too?'¹⁴ (*Kiss* (1963-1964) was shown alongside Edison's *The*

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May Irwin Kiss [1893] as part of the 'Love and Kisses in 40 Different Ways' film programme at The Bridge in St. Marks Place, New York, throughout July of 1965.)¹⁵ Therefore, it is possible to suggest that what is being demonstrated in the bad filmmaking is not technological ineptitude but another deliberate performance at being naïve, here the naïve filmmaker, complete with the ability to trick us and some of his associates and critics into thinking that Warhol doesn't understand the function of the zoom and the purpose of the camera's tripod. Paul Morrissey and others would also have us believe this in their attempts to wrestle authorship away from Warhol. Certainly, some of the initial experiments in filmmaking may represent Warhol finding his way: as Gerard Malanga suggests 'they were a learning process.'¹⁶ However, it is egregious of someone like Stephen Koch to suggest as he does in one interview that Warhol was 'genuinely ungifted' in the narrative arts.¹⁷ Much of the bad camerawork and the mistakes that render Warhol's filmmaking practices highly visible may be understood as instances where Warhol delights and confounds through his performance of incompetence or reluctance and in fact achieves the very opposite of what he claims or demonstrates. It is in fact quite difficult to deliberately make something bad and have people believe that was your intention. In a knowing statement of this fact Warhol told *Vogue* magazine 'anybody can make a good movie, but if you consciously try to do a bad movie, that's like making a *good* bad movie.'¹⁸ John Waters embodied a similar philosophy to Warhol when he famously wrote that 'to understand bad taste one must have very good taste.'¹⁹

The gradual shift in Warhol's filmmaking away from static set-ups and single subjects, a public, critical and promotional perception that built the lore of Warhol's early filmmaking through *Sleep* (1963) and *Empire* (1964) as minimal and primitive, was announced a year earlier in a Cinematheque promotion for the double-bill premieres of *Vinyl* (1965) and *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1965). *Vinyl* was written up in the copy as 'the first non-static film' although that is inaccurate since numerous *Screen Tests* contradict this and the earlier and unreleased *Batman Dracula* (1964) presents the antithesis of static camera work, including 360° pans, close-ups, erratic trombone zooming, and the camera turned upside

down, a use of the device closer in style to that of Jack Smith, who appears in the film as Dracula.²⁰ In a 1966 interview for PBS television when asked about the change in his film style Warhol says that:

I am trying to see what else the camera can do. And I am mostly concerned with, uh ... doing bad camerawork and uh, ... ah ... and we're trying to make it so bad but doing it well. Where, um ... where the most important thing is happening you seem to miss it all the time or showing as many scratches as you can in a film or all the dirt you can get on the film, uh, ... or zoom badly, where you zoom and you hit ... uh ... miss the most important thing. And, uh ... your camera jiggles, ah ... so that everybody knows that you're watching a film.²¹

This period of promoting bad camera work, the naïve authorship, and the performance of cluelessness, disinterest, and incompetence described above, seems to have begun before *The Chelsea Girls* (1966) as a slight gesture in *Lupe* (1965) where the camera pans up away from Edie Sedgwick towards the intricate ceiling and in *Kitchen* (1965) where the camera remains focused on the objects on the kitchen table. Among the *Screen Tests*, as early as 1964, the Cliff Jarr screen test shows Warhol experimenting with the camera. There are also some hints towards bad camerawork as well as some minimal editing with *Vinyl* (a film more concerned with bad acting), and there are late Screen Tests from 1966 indicating a preference for mobility over stasis, in particular one of Nico's and another with Richard Rheem. The Rheem *Screen Test* includes a range of those 'bad techniques' already described including zooming, panning, and going in and out of focus, as well as some abrupt jerky camera movements. However, this particular style reached its zenith in *The Velvet Underground and Nico* (1966) where the wild zooms, pans, tilts, and other movements mark the camera's presence in an excessive manner and thus Warhol's authorial presence behind it. On the other hand the camera work in *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, a film which was intended as a background reel for the Exploding Plastic Inevitable along with *The Velvet Underground Tarot Cards* (1966), might be thought to complement the Velvets' jamming session in the sense that the camera itself might be thought to 'jam' in an unrehearsed and improvised

manner – that is, until in the infamous real moment when the New York police arrive in response to complaints about noise levels. Unlike Pop Art's ability to remediate and simulate commercial aesthetics and techniques, Warhol's filmmaking was never wont to incorporate the paradigmatic good filmmaking techniques of popular cinema despite Warhol's love of Hollywood, popular culture, and the finesse of mass entertainment.

Bufferin Commercial's first silent reel was likely a mistake due either to a technical error or the sound on the camera not being turned on. There are other films in which there are silent reels caused by technical problems or forgetfulness: for example, the sound noticeably drops out in *Tub Girls* (1967) at the end of the scene with Brigid Berlin, and *Since* (1966), the Factory restaging of the JFK assassination, includes unused reels in which microphones can be seen but nothing can be heard.²² However, like many of his other technical errors, Warhol decided not to abandon or reject this silent reel but include it as part of the overall work. This immediately suggests an analogous pairing with *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1965) whose first reel, which does have sound, is instead notorious for being out of focus to the point of abstraction due to a lens problem. Warhol did film *Poor Little Rich Girl* again a few weeks later and in focus but he decided to keep the first out of focus reel from the first shoot and combine it with a second reel from the subsequent in-focus shoot.²³ We initially experience a desire to see Edie in focus, but after ten minutes it becomes strangely absorbing; we shift from a typical reaction that it is in fact unwatchable to an enlightened acceptance of the conceptual and the abstract. *Bufferin Commercial* may at first make us desperate to hear its silent reel yet in not hearing we are eventually absorbed into the full effect of the peripatetic style, Warhol's presence, and his aesthetic judgments, especially his eye for beautiful faces. There is a kind of frustration at first that Warhol makes us confront when he includes his mistakes and accidents as integral components of the work: both of these films' first reels challenge our sensory relationships to film as some kind of desire or need to either see or hear. The first reels of *Bufferin Commercial* and *Poor Little Rich Girl* last long enough for us to get over the initial disturbance of being denied clarity or audibility and in a way this positions us not to experience the text

conventionally as 'just a film'. Rather, they disengage us from a vernacular sort of spectatorship, instead reinforcing the material difference between image and sound that popular cinema works hard to deny. *Poor Little Rich Girl* and *Bufferin Commercial* certainly challenge the security found in conventional modes of spectatorship and the psychoanalytic paradigms of film theory that explain that our psychic investment in cinema satiates the unconscious drives to see, hear, and be stitched into an experience that comforts us with fullness and unity.²⁴ Warhol cuts off our relationship to some of these fundamental comforting expectations of cinema, despite the endless critical and theoretical attempts to fashion Warhol as a cine-voyeur of 'film fantasy peephoholism.'²⁵ Warhol positions us within an avant-garde experience that unmoors us from our pedestrian expectations of what film is or can be and forces us to recognise that popular cinema is so often governed by a powerful all-seeing and all-hearing experience. Angell sums up these filmic challenges best in her account of *Poor Little Rich Girl* when she describes how the contrasting reels work together as a tension between 'suspense and resolution' that is equally translatable to the experience of not-hearing/hearing in *Bufferin Commercial* in which sound plays off against silence as another powerful revelatory dynamic.²⁶

It is interesting that Warhol chose to include his lengthy sound-less reel in *Bufferin Commercial* since it was a film whose purpose was intended as commercial 'test' at a time when pop art was still ascendant. It is in fact defiantly un-commercial and embraces failure. Yet, given the notoriety of his filmmaking in the press, and the perception of being detached that Warhol created through his public appearances, why commission mid-sixties 'Chelsea Girls Warhol' to make anything close to a regular commercial for an everyday brand product in the first place?²⁷ However, that Warhol might be selected to make a commercial of some type is not as unusual as it may at first appear. A few years earlier Warhol worked on two corporate trade ad commissions, one for the Listerine brand and the other for the Container Corporation of America. In the former Warhol produced a single silk-screened image of a Listerine bottle (1963) in gold paint on the same phthalo green background as he used for *Four Marylins* (1962).²⁸ *Bufferin* as a brand had already associated itself with a filmmaker in

the 1950s when it sponsored the *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* television series between 1956-1957 including an extensive run of print ads in *TV Guide* featuring Hitchcock and television spots bookending each episode of the show. This association with filmmakers and being on trend also occurred after the brief association with Warhol when a pre-*Muppets* Jim Henson, then an experimental filmmaker, made a television spot advert for Bufferin. Henson's 1967 Bufferin commercial liberally borrows from underground cinema techniques giving visual and sonic substance to the concepts of memory and pain through superimposing multiple images on top of one another, bleaching and scratching the 16mm film, and including unusual synthesizer pops and blips. Henson perhaps delivers several years too late an impoverished version of what an 'underground commercial' might have looked like.

For quite some time there was a set of common assumptions and practices derived evidently from the exhibitions of Warhol's work that sought to neatly periodise and define Warhol as almost exclusively Pop and bracket off, filter, even erase, the artist from his early and late career commercial work for newspapers, shop windows, and periodicals, in addition to nearly all of his filmmaking practices. Interestingly, the otherwise exhaustive volumes in the *Catalogue Raisonné* are limited to paintings and sculptures from 1961 to (currently) 1974 which lends itself to a hierarchical and canonical definition of Warhol's 'important work' that draws a boundary around the artist through an exclusive focus on fine art.²⁹ These practices suggest a clear separation between a pre-Pop and Pop Warhol or between commercial Warhol and fine art Warhol; certainly, Warhol the filmmaker is not in evidence. However, Warhol's artistic identity is too complex to lend itself to these simplistic, discrete, and romantic accounts that attempt to neatly historicise and categorise, ideally fixing the Pop Warhol to between 1961 and 1964 through a very narrowly defined body of work that is really contingent and continuous with all of Warhol's work. This counter-productive framing was challenged by one of the most important posthumous exhibitions of Warhol's work that took serious note of Warhol's 1950s commercial illustrations, early business practices, and private drawings many of which were made during the same period in which he produced the

majority of his iconic Pop screen prints.³⁰ The 1989 exhibition and catalogue for *Success is a Job in New York: The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol* has been central to repositioning Warhol in terms of the different interrelationships between the commercial and the artistic.³¹ Donna M. De Salvo, the exhibition curator, revealed that Warhol was still producing commercial art for the Fleming Joffe leather goods company in 1962 at the height of his Pop career and the Listerine commission above occurs in 1963.³² The owners of Fleming Joffe, Teddy and Arthur Edman, recall that Warhol might even have been producing commercial illustrations for them as late as 1964 when Warhol's filmmaking was well under way.³³ A year prior to *Success is a Job in New York* another important posthumous exhibition, *The Films of Andy Warhol*, took place at the Whitney Museum in 1988 when the first of the restored Warhol films were shown through April and June.³⁴ Despite the appearance of these two landmark exhibitions of Warhol's work within a year of each other, there has never been a sense in which they were, at that moment, in dialogue as both have been considered to be very separate explorations (pre-pop commercial Warhol and Warhol the experimental filmmaker), even though Warhol had exhibited his films alongside his paintings for his 1968 exhibition at Stockholm's Moderna Museet. There are numerous subsequent exhibitions following in the footsteps of *Success* and *Films* such as *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (2008) and *Warhol Headlines* (2008) that have managed to synthesize the many different Warhols and present a more integrated account of artistic practice and business acumen.³⁵ The majority of Warhol's film output adds levels of complication to any kind of distinction between the commercial and fine art Warhol, the entrepreneur and the experimental filmmaker, and the separation of art from business when one compares (for instance) the avant-gardism of *Blow Job* (1964) to the theatrically distributed *Heat* (1972). Therefore, what makes *Bufferin Commercial* interesting is that it is one of the few pre-exploitation or pre-commercial films to be produced at the intersection between his business activities and his artistic practices.

In 1966 Warhol sought outside funding for an unrealised film called *Jane Eyre Bare* which was to be Warhol's first 'commercial' film production: based on

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Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, to be written by Ronald Tavel, and starring Edie Sedgwick.³⁶ It was no secret that Warhol loved Hollywood and had ambitions to make money from his films despite his zeal to eschew classical film style. There was an earlier attempt to form a film company in 1964 called Rom Palm Hol with some of Warhol's earlier filmmaking collaborators, John Palmer and Henry Romney (both fundamental in making *Empire* [1964] happen), and the genesis of obtaining the rights to, and adapting, *A Clockwork Orange* dates to this unsuccessful venture as does *Batman Dracula*.³⁷ In 1967 Warhol even suggested that he would like to make movie versions of William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1959) and Charles Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* (1857).³⁸ *The Chelsea Girls* (1966) was the first and only underground blockbuster that generated considerable revenue for Warhol, piquing the interest of film producers; it was quickly followed by a profit-turning re-release of *My Hustler* (1965) with additional footage. The subsequent 'sexploitation' features that were initiated by the Hudson Theatre's request for something to follow the success of *The Chelsea Girls* and *My Hustler*, and which included such well known titles as *Bike Boy* (1967) and *Nude Restaurant* (1967), were commercially orientated without necessarily sacrificing the formal tropes and thematic features of Warhol's experimental style: in these films, the strobe cut features heavily. *Bufferin Commercial* needs to be distinguished from the sexploitation titles firstly, because the film was commissioned, and secondly, it was filmed in 1966 and does not belong to the post-*Chelsea Girls* sexploitation cycle of 1967. Therefore, and despite its ties to commerce as a 'business art film', *Bufferin Commercial* is not really representative of that late period of Warhol's commercial filmmaking.

Bufferin Commercial was not the only sixties film commission. As early as 1963 when he first began making films during the summer of that year Warhol made a short film called *Sarah-Soap* (1963) to be used for illustration as part of a *Harper's Bazaar* commission.³⁹ Much later, through Fred Hughes, Warhol became acquainted with the de Menils who were prominent art collectors as well as trustees of MoMA, who commissioned Warhol to film sunsets for them in addition to producing screen-printed portraits of Dominique de Menil. Warhol filmed three 1200ft sunset reels in 1967 (one appears as reel no.77 of ****

[1967]), part of an unfinished film project that was meant to be projected throughout the summer in an Ecumenical Chapel at the first international HemisFair in San Antonio in 1968.⁴⁰ In 1968 Warhol was also commissioned to make a sixty-second television spot promoting a maraschino cherry ice cream sundae for the Schrafft's chain of East-Coast restaurants.⁴¹ The sixty-second clip, using videotape rather than film, was described by *Time* magazine as 'a swirling phantasmagoria of colour'; the dessert was promoted on the menu as the 'Underground Sundae' clearly making a connection to Warhol's cinema and the underground rather than the more obvious Pop.⁴² Frank Shattuck, the president of the restaurant chain, was quoted in the *New York Times* magazine declaring 'we haven't just got a commercial, we've acquired a work of art!'⁴³ There are other examples of Warhol's relationship to advertising in his sixties cinema, as one of the reels of **** referred to as *Nair* or *Gerard Has His Hair Removed by Nair* involves Malanga wearing nothing but black underpants having his chest depilated by three women using the branded product.⁴⁴ The '*Nair* commercial' was also shown much later in the mid seventies at a Warhol/Malanga event at New York University's Fine Arts Club that featured both films by Warhol (*Couch* [1964] and 'The Gerard Malanga Story' reel from *The Chelsea Girls*) and Malanga (*Portraits of the Artist as a Young Man* [1964], *April Diary* [1970], and his double screen *Vision* [1975]).⁴⁵ The *Nair* reel was advertised as a segment from **** but more importantly in Jonas Mekas's programme notes for this event *Nair* is described as a film 'conceived "as a commercial"'.⁴⁶ Then there is the unfinished *Soap Opera* (1964-65) with its mimicry of television flow complete with commercials devised by the television producer Lester Persky.⁴⁷ In fact, it is probably fair to suggest that a good deal of Warhol's artistic output is often underscored by the tensions between art and commerce even when, like *Nair* and *Bufferin Commercial*, it is subversive and lacks any obvious formal relation to commercial aesthetics or the language and appeal of advertising and popular cinema. *Bufferin Commercial* actually works against the product and standards of corporate advertising by relating its use to the illicit drug activities of the Factory scene at that time. *Bufferin* is described in the film as an 'upper' and the suggestion is made that you can take it anally. One might even go as far as to say that the close-up of the television un-tuned and strobing along with some of the

topsy-turvy camera work, if we take it as a reflexive joke on Warhol's part, is there to induce or suggest a headache. *Bufferin* would be a remedy for the Warhol film experience! In the latter period of his career Warhol did explicitly engage in numerous television adverts and print advertising but the difference is that Warhol himself was the advertisement rather than his art (see, for example, the 1985 Vidal Sassoon print ad for men's hairspray, the Diet Coke advert from 1985, or the 1983 Japanese TV advertising spot for TDK videocassettes).⁴⁸ These print ads and commercials are selling the idea of Warhol as the celebrity artist. In other words, Warhol's function here is to simply endorse a product rather than create something. It is Warhol as an image and a body who is the commission, the Warhol who was registered with the Ford Modelling Agency.

Bufferin Commercial is not unique in the way that it suggests different connections, continuities, and relations between business and art across the range of Warhol's artistic output. There is evidence of different commercial ventures to establish film companies throughout the 1960s, none of which reached fruition, and *Bufferin Commercial* represents a failed attempt to turn Factory filmmaking into something that could be commissioned alongside Warhol's commercial art. A close reading of any Warhol film and its context leaves one knowing that there is much more to explain and to define, and that another example or anecdote will likely contradict or embellish those claims. In *Bufferin Commercial* I have tried to capture some of Warhol's stylistic conventions of indirection, the 'sloppy, offhand, garbagy look', and the peripatetic camerawork that begins in 1965 and subsequently dominates 1966.⁴⁹ *Bufferin Commercial* also comes at the time when the Factory was at its most industrious: a year dominated by the management of The Velvet Underground as well as a period of transition in filmmaking when Warhol had finished the cycle of films with Ronald Tavel and was moving further in the direction of projection and exhibition experiments, ultimately combining those through the Exploding Plastic Inevitable. However, all of these endeavours are linked in their different ways and without compromise to the Warholian concept that good business is the best art, even when it fails.

Thanks to Richard Frank for his time and generous sharing of information on the commissioning and production history of *Bufferin Commercial*, Claire Henry for her insight, and Greg Pierce for actually recommending I watch *Bufferin Commercial* in the first place.

¹ Lane Slate, 'USA Artists: Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein' (1966) transcribed from the broadcast by Kenneth Goldsmith, in Goldsmith (ed.) *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews*, New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004, p. 83.

² Claire Henry from the Whitney's Warhol Film Project believes that *Bufferin Commercial* was intended to be a double screen projection. However, Greg Pierce, curator of film and video at The Warhol in Pittsburgh is doubtful that the film was originally intended as one of the double screen projections. He notes that in *The Filmmakers Co-Operative Catalogue No.4* (1967), that lists the Warhol films that could be rented and details on their projection, *Bufferin Commercial* is noted as a 70 minute film with no reference to double screen projection despite other films being listed quite specifically as single and double projection films. However, this doesn't eliminate later exhibition of the film in the context of multi-screen projection and exhibition experiments in 1967 and 1968.

³ Interview with Richard Frank by the author.

⁵ Another account of the film also suggests that *Bufferin Commercial* played briefly in a Manhattan department store. Conversation with Greg Pierce.

⁵ *Village Voice*, 16 March 1967, p.18 and p.28.

⁶ In the 20-minute documentary from 1967 called *Superartist* Warhol asks Henry Geldzahler to answer the questions and he dutifully does, providing some interesting sound bites such as 'the movies are non-commercial' and 'he's not interested in sound and the technical problems'.

⁷ Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, London: Penguin Books, 1997 [1975], p.92.

⁸ Callie Angell, *Warhol Headlines*, London: Prestel, 2012, p.52.

⁹ Jean Stein and George Plimpton, *Edie: An American Biography*, London: Random House, 2006, p.234.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Thom Anderson, 'Film', *Artforum*, June 1966, p.58.

¹² Patrick Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films*, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986, p.162.

¹³ Kelly Cresap, *Pop Trickster Fool: Warhol Performs Naiveté*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

¹⁴ Quoted from *Superartist*. What is unusual about the documentary is that the voice-over and questions are asked by a child.

¹⁵ *Village Voice*, 8 July 1965, p.12.

¹⁶ Malanga, interview in Smith (1986), p.365.

¹⁷ Koch, interview in Smith (1986) p. 406.

¹⁸ Leticia Kent, 'Andy Warhol, moviemanager', *Vogue*, March 1970, page unknown.

¹⁹ John Waters, *Shock Value*. New York: Delta Publishing, 1981, p.2.

²⁰ *Tarzan and Jane Regained, Sort of* (1963) also contradicts this; *Haircut* No.1 includes some brief hand-held shots; and there is a slow zoom out to a medium shot in the John Palmer/Andrew Meyer reel of *Kiss* (1963-64). The claim that *Vinyl* was the first non-static film would refer to the public exhibition of Warhol's films, as *Batman Dracula* was never finished and never released.

²¹ Lane Slate, 'USA Artists', p.83.

²² This useful anecdote was told to Karen Beckman by Callie Angell, and appears in a footnote to the chapter on *Since* in Beckman's *Crash: Cinema and the Politics of Speed and Stasis*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010, pp.259-60 n. 10.

²³ Victor Bockris, *Warhol: The Biography*, Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1993, p.221.

²⁴ I am of course referring here to Christian Metz *et al.* and the 'screen theory' moment of the 1970s that works well for Classical Hollywood cinema but really falls apart or at least needs rethought when applied to experimental and avant-garde cinemas and spectatorships.

²⁵ Parker Tyler, *Underground Film: A Critical History*, New York: Da Capo Press, 1995, p.44.

²⁶ Callie Angell, *The Films of Andy Warhol Part II*, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994, p.22.

²⁷ *The Chelsea Girls* was in cinemas and already notorious before *Bufferin Commercial* was filmed in December of 1966.

²⁸ Not much is known about the Listerine painting except that it was painted in the middle of 1963. Frei and Printz remark that there is no documentation related to this single work. George Frei and Neil Printz, *Andy Warhol: Catalogue Raisonné Volume 1 1961-1963*, London: Phaidon, 2002, p.451.

²⁹ Frei and Printz, *ibid*; George Frei and Neil Printz, *Andy Warhol: Catalogue Raisonné Volume 2 1964-1969*, London: Phaidon, 2004; and George Frei and Neil Printz, *Andy Warhol: Catalogue Raisonné Volume 3 1970-1974*, London: Phaidon, 2010.

³⁰ *Success is a Job in New York: The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol* was exhibited in 1989 in New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and London. Donna M. De Salvo (ed.) *Success is a Job in New York: The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol*, Pittsburgh: Grey Art Gallery and Study Centre, 1989.

³¹ In addition to *Success is a Job in New York* the other notable early publication in this respect is Jesse Kornbluth, *Pre Pop Warhol*, New York: Random House, 1988.

³² Donna M. De Salvo, 'Learning the ropes: observations on the early work of Andy Warhol' in De Salvo, *Success is a Job in New York*, p.9.

³³ 'Noa the Boa Slithers in to View', *Carnegie Magazine*, July/August 2000, p.38.

³⁴ *The Films of Andy Warhol*, Whitney Museum of American Art, April-June 1988. The films in the exhibition included *Sleep, Kiss, Haircut No. 1, Eat, Blow Job, Empire, Harlot, Vinyl, My Hustler, Beauty No.2, The Velvet Underground and Nico, The Chelsea Girls, I, a Man, Lonesome Cowboys, Flesh*, and two reels from **** titled *Katrina Dead* and *Sunset Beach on Long Island*.

³⁵ *Other Voices, Other Rooms: A Guide to 706 Items in 2 Hours 56 Minutes*, 2008, Hayward Gallery, London and *Warhol Headlines*, 2011, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

³⁶ The film was to be produced by the philanthropist and oil magnate Huntington Hartford and filmed on one of his islands in the West Indies that was also used for James Bond films.

³⁷ For more on the Rom Palm Hol Company see Angell's notes on Henry Romney in Callie Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, New York: Abrams, 2006, p.165.

³⁸ *Superartist*.

³⁹ Angell, *Screen Tests*, p.58.

⁴⁰ Thanks to Claire Henry for this information.

⁴¹ Warhol discusses the advert that 'just took a minute to do' in Goldsmith (ed.), *I'll Be Your Mirror*, p.166.

⁴² The 'Underground Sundae' TV Spot is discussed in 'Advertising: Schrafft gets with it', *Time*, 25 October 1968, p.98 and 'Warhol and Underground Sundaes: Schrafft's Will Never Be the Same Again', *The National Observer*, 28 October 1968.

⁴³ *New York Times Magazine*, p.144, date unknown.

⁴⁴ The three women waxing Gerard Malanga who it would seem are fairly unknown to Warhol's milieu are Johanna Lawrenson, Marcie Trinder, and Katrina Toland. A photograph by Billy Name depicting this scene can also be found in Debra Miller, *Billy Name: Stills from the Warhol Films*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1994, p.89.

⁴⁵ The archive material featuring this flyer is missing the actual year when this event took place, although May 12th is still clearly visible. In a conversation with Malanga he told me that his own print of *Nair* is still in storage at Anthology Film Archives.

⁴⁶ It important to note that the screening of Warhol's films at the Fine Art Club took place after the official withdrawal of his movies from circulation.

⁴⁷ For more on *Soap Opera* and its relationship to television see Lynn Spigel, 'Warhol TV: From Media Scandals to Everyday Boredom' in Spigel, *TV by Design: Modern Art and the Rise of Network Television*, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2008, p.252.

⁴⁸ David E. James provides a more comprehensive list of the advertisements Warhol was involved with in the 1980s and offers a detailed argument related to the point presented here – namely, how to resolve the contradictions of Warhol as a fine artist and a business artist. David E. James, 'The Unsecret Life: A Warhol Advertisement', *October*, Vol. 56, Spring 1991, pp.21-41.

⁴⁹ Jean Stein and George Plimpton, *Edie*, p.234.