

Johanna Gosse

Subterranean Homegrown Blues

Thomas Crow. *The Long March of Pop: Art, Music, and Design, 1930–1995*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 412 pp., 200 color ill., 150 b/w. \$45

The year 1968 was punctuated by spectacular violence. In the span of two months, Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were both assassinated. Social unrest erupted across the United States, reaching a fever pitch with the brutal police suppression of protestors at Chicago’s Democratic National Convention in the final days of August. Meanwhile, the war in Vietnam escalated in the wake of the Tet Offensive. Two other, failed assassination attempts from 1968—one targeting the Pop artist Andy Warhol, and the other the German radical leftist Rudi Duschke—were less prominent, though nevertheless significant within the histories of advanced art and radical politics.¹ In a subtle (if unintentional) nod to this historical coincidence, Thomas Crow’s latest book, *The Long March of Pop: Art, Music, and Design, 1930–1995* stages an encounter between these two figures. The cover illustration is Warhol’s *Gold Marilyn Monroe*, a 1962 silkscreen painting that fuses celebrity, commodity, and feminine masquerade into a shimmering devotional icon. Stamped across the corners of the painting’s gilded surface is the title of Crow’s book, which riffs on Duschke’s signature concept of “the long march through the institutions,” a phrase he coined the same year he was shot. Invoking Mao’s so-called Long March of the 1930s, Duschke’s “long march” referred to strategic interventions into existing institutions and industries in order to forge antibourgeois zones of resistance, or counterinstitutions, and to pave the way for revolutionary structural change—certainly a bold political analogy for Pop’s position within the art institution. Often misattributed to Antonio Gramsci, the slogan was promptly adopted by other German Marxist theorists, such as Herbert Marcuse. No matter that Crow references neither Duschke nor Mao, Gramsci nor Marcuse directly in the text—the allusion is plain. The apparent contradictions between Pop art and left politics provide the central provocation

and framing dialectic for this dazzlingly comprehensive, elaborately constellated new history of Pop, which lays down a gauntlet for future scholarship not only on 1960s art, but on art’s relationship to vernacular cultural production more generally.

Scholarly accounts of Pop’s profane coupling of Marx and Coca-Cola, critique and affirmation, are nothing new. However, *The Long March* manages to reposition this tense marriage within an expanded historical, cultural, and literary context: folk and allegory. Departing from previous studies that trace Pop’s prehistory to the interwar American modernists who trafficked in popular, commercial, and industrial imagery (such as Stuart Davis, Charles Demuth, Gerald Murphy, and Charles Sheeler), Crow instead anchors Pop’s *longue durée* within the field of folk art and music from the beginning of the twentieth century to its various postwar revivals, from Grandma Moses to Pete Seeger. Viewed as an aesthetic tributary of folk, Crow’s “long march of Pop” thus begins decades earlier than its typical mid-1950s origin stories on either side of the Atlantic—the Independent Group, Robert Rauschenberg’s Combines—would have it. Accordingly, Crow’s Pop also endures decades longer than its usual late-1960s expiration date (one which, not coincidentally, corresponds to Warhol’s shooting and to the mounting disillusionment experienced by the hippie counterculture more broadly). As such, Crow’s narrative extends well into the mid-1990s, with figures like Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst acting as Warhol’s post-Cold War successors.

Whereas Crow’s previous writing on Pop, notably, his 1987 essay “Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol,”² dealt specifically with Pop’s relationship to the exigencies of mainstream American culture, and particularly the proliferation of mass media spectacles of violence, *The Long March* instead opens with a prior moment of social unrest, the brutally suppressed labor strikes of the 1910s. Crow suggests that it was labor sympathies (and a heavy dose of class-based guilt) that motivated Abby Aldrich Rockefeller’s avid collecting of American folk art and eventually led to her cofounding of the Museum of Modern Art in 1929. From there, he maps out the shifting dynamics between folk and advanced American art in the United States, from

the Popular Front 1930s to the McCarthyite 1950s. Positioned against this historical backdrop, Pop emerges in the 1960s as a belated fellow traveler of folk, particularly its musical variants, which come to the analytic fore in the remainder of the book.

Subsequent chapters examine Pop in tandem with folk culture, across music (broadly defined to accommodate other genres like rock ’n’ roll, blues, and punk), youth subcultures (automobile design, surfing), and graphic design, from New York and London to Southern California, and, in the final chapter, brief layovers in Havana and Paris. Crow assembles a cast ranging from what he terms the “Indiana-Lichtenstein-Rosenquist-Warhol phalanx” of New York Pop (viii)—to an equally familiar roster of artists like Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Claes Oldenburg, Richard Hamilton, and Ed Ruscha. Yet he also includes less canonical figures like Harry Smith, Patty Mucha, Billy Al Bengston, Jann Haworth, and Pauline Boty, whose collective presence broadens the narrative’s geographic scope westward to California and across the pond to “Swinging London.” Likewise, sections on Mucha, Haworth, Boty, and other female artists diversify (if only fleetingly) an otherwise predictably all-male artistic ensemble, one that also includes graphic artists like Rick Griffin and Milton Glaser. Throughout, visual artists are paired with musicians who embody the folk ethos, whether they play acoustic or electric, labor anthems or psychedelic rock: Woody Guthrie, Huddie “Lead Belly” Ledbetter, the Byrds, the Who, Bob Dylan, the Beatles, and so on. Noting that “Pop Art and post-Beatles rock music function interchangeably as cultural signatures of the 1960s, yet are rarely if ever discussed in relation to one another” (3), Crow makes a strong case for new interdisciplinary approaches to postwar art history that take popular culture, especially rock ’n’ roll, into account.

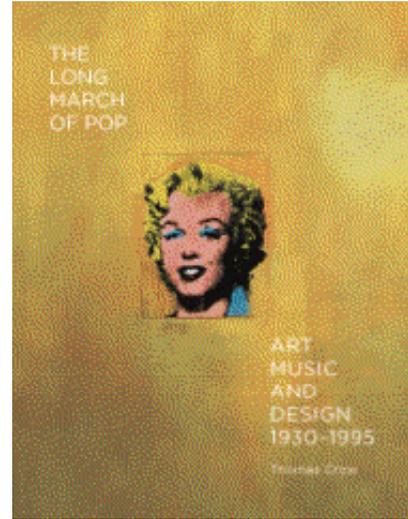
As social art history, the initial chapters make a compelling case for the relationship between Pop art and folk, especially the vernacular music assembled in Smith’s *Anthology of American Folk* from 1952. This six-LP set provided a largely middle-class, white, urban audience with access to the traditional, social, and religious songs of mostly rural, Scotch-Irish, Appalachian, and Cajun communities, as well as a small selection of

tracks by African American Delta blues musicians such as Mississippi John Hurt.³ Crow recognizes an “organizational impulse” and allegorical tendency in Smith’s design for the liner notes of this landmark compilation, which he relates both formally and conceptually to Johns’s *Flag* and *Target with Four Faces*, both from 1955, as well as Rauschenberg’s concomitant development of the flatbed picture plane. Summarizing the allegorical common denominator of Pop as follows, “It is a persistent tendency of art composed from inventories of fragmentary elements to organize itself into larger chains or networks of allegorical meaning” (233), Crow argues that Pop’s folkloric authenticity is registered at the level of allegory, a motif that, for him, binds Pop and folk across period, geography, and context.

In many ways, *The Long March* represents a summary attempt to unpack the mutually constitutive relationships between art, mass culture, and society, a project Crow launched in his first book, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (1985). Similarly, his essay “Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts,” written in the early 1980s but still required reading, is perhaps the most influential treatment of the subject since Clement Greenberg’s benchmark 1939 essay, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch.” Arguably one of the most polarizing critical figures of the last century, Greenberg is glaringly absent from *The Long March*, which is a clear signal of Crow’s determination to produce a critical narrative unburdened by the arch-modernist’s by now well-rehearsed critical prescriptions; it goes without saying that Greenberg had no taste for Pop.

In this sense, Crow’s reading of Pop as the allegorical return of a repressed folkloric authenticity builds from his previous work on the high-low culture dialectic and offers a welcome antidote to lingering strains of Greenbergian hierarchies in contemporary art discourse. At the same time, he acknowledges that Pop’s affinity with folk also entails a “general refusal to confront the gigantic component of the national vernacular that is African-American in origin” (158).⁴ Said “general refusal” is a tendency that is not unique to Pop art and has indeed characterized the critical reception of American folk music that Crow seeks to align with Pop. The music historian Elijah Wald has noted that the postwar folk

revival’s almost exclusively white fan base prized the mystique of cultural authenticity and outsider status attributed to African American musicians such as Lead Belly, and was thus less interested in those musicians who deliberately courted and achieved mass appeal (a similar analysis could be made of



jazz and blues).⁵ The story of rock ’n’ roll’s appropriation of black vernacular forms and style, from Elvis Presley to the Rolling Stones, is a familiar one that need not be rehearsed here, yet its relative absence from Crow’s discussion signals the political investments and anxieties surrounding cultural authenticity undergirding his argument about Pop and folk.

Looking back to “Modernism and Mass Culture,” its first page narrates the emergence of the American neo-avant-garde not from folk, but from a transatlantic historical avant-garde—from Cubist and Dada collage to Piet Mondrian’s *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, wherein “the most austere and hermetic of twentieth-century abstractionists . . . anchored the culmination of decades of formal research in a delighted discovery of American traffic, neon, and commercialized Black music.”⁶ In other words, Mondrian’s was an avant-garde cosmopolitanism of radical heteronomy, one belied by the strict geometries of his aesthetic. Yet in the present study, Crow’s rich dialectical interplay of art and mass culture has become oddly constricted, its boundaries constrained by its complexly braided narrative of Pop and folk. By accepting the apparent exclusion

of African American vernacular culture as a defining, implicitly rational if not inevitable feature of Pop rather than a symptomatic problem, this narrative reentrenches the exclusionary logic that renders folk, and by extension Pop, as definitively white.

Rather than reaffirming the cultural whiteness of Pop by embedding it within a folk culture that is historically coded as rural, white, and working class, many of the works under discussion signal racial anxiety through their fixation with surface, color, and masquerade. Warhol’s portraits, especially those of Marilyn Monroe (like the one used on the book’s cover), suggest a multipronged critique not only of the celebrity and commodity form, but also of feminine artifice as a form of erotic minstrelsy—making-up as blacking-up. In short, the intersecting cultural politics of race (as well as class, gender, and sexuality) are registered in Pop precisely through sublimation, hyperbole, absence, and the trace. To downplay its (prohibited or exaggerated) presence is to sever Pop from its art-historical successors—specifically, postmodern practices of the following decade that adopted allegory as a mode for working through the political exigencies of identity under late capitalism.⁷

In this sense, it is surprising that *The Long March* neglects the folk-inflected practices of a range of female Pop artists, many of whom worked with vernacular materials like wood and fabric, and referenced feminized craft forms like embroidery, weaving (Dorothy Grebanak’s hooked rugs featuring commercial logos), and stuffed dolls (Haworth’s soft sculptures of human figures, which receive passing mention on page 354). The French-Venezuelan artist Marisol was particularly vulnerable to gendered craft hierarchies, with Lawrence Alloway (the critic with whom Crow opens the book, instead of Greenberg) regarding her work as “folkloric decoration” and “naive,” precisely due to her use of craft materials and of her biographical subject matter, which was deemed too introspective, and by implication, feminine and narcissistic.⁸ To include Marisol in Pop’s long, wide march would provide an opportunity to unpack the gendered implications of the folk/Pop matrix, as well as to introduce female singer-songwriters—such as Joan Baez, Joni Mitchell, or Judy Collins—who might help

to disrupt the book’s otherwise exclusively masculine musical narrative.

Of all of Crow’s art-music cross-ref-erencing, it is his coupling of Warhol and Dylan that is his most sustained and concep-tually elaborate. Arguing that the “mordant documentary” approach adopted by Warhol’s *Death in America* series is echoed in many of Dylan’s mid-1960s songs, Crow experiments with a more aphoristic mode of engagement by presenting the 1960s silkscreen paintings as a series accompanied by short, fragmen-tary captions, in a manner that immediately recalls John Berger’s 1972 *Ways of Seeing*. And it is here that Crow’s motivation for deploy-ing Dylan, the lyricist, poet, and social critic, as a foil for the notoriously glib Warhol becomes apparent. This mini-survey begins with a methodological gambit, which Crow describes as “an attempt to comprehend the whole by way of these nested queries: what kind of world do the paintings add up to; and what kind of subjective presence or protagonist do they imply?” (287). Taken together, he seems to suggest, these works conjure up an entire world, much as a Dylan song aims to capture social conditions with poetic perspicacity. There is something admi-rably provisional and speculative about this experiment, even as it treads onto familiar territory within Warhol scholarship, espe-cially Crow’s own “Saturday Disasters.”

To align Warhol and Dylan is to draw an equivalence or, at least, imply some correspondence, between the artist’s abandonment of advertising for fine art and the musician’s controversial decision to “go electric,” a watershed moment in rock history that he declared with deafening feedback at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, an event that generated controversy in his folk fan base and the mainstream media.⁹ Indeed, a compelling case could be made for comparing Warhol’s famously blank persona to the mid-1960s Dylan, with his dark sunglasses and opaque, subtly hostile *blagues* lobbed at a bewildered press corps, such as “God, I’m glad I’m not me.”¹⁰ But beyond their mutual adoption of media personas and overlapping social circles, what actually binds these two figures for Crow is their chiasmic relationship to authenticity and allegory during pivotal moments in their respective careers: “Dylan, once the prophet of folk authenticity, veers sharply toward Pop ephemera and then has to reckon with the

consequences of his apostasy; Warhol, long assumed to be the prophet of mass-cultural superficiality, turns out to be channeling a deep and ancient vein of Western culture,” namely allegory (306).

Like Greil Marcus, who devoted an entire book to the song, Crow zeroes in on “Like a Rolling Stone,” which debuted in July 1965 as the lead single from the album *Highway 61 Revisited*. The track catapulted Dylan to pop stardom and inaugurated his electric turn when he performed it on the Newport stage less than a week after it hit the airwaves. Crow convincingly argues that the song’s lyrics make reference to Warhol, as well as to the artist’s favorite Superstar/queer twin/ego ideal (and possible Dylan paramour) Edie Sedgwick. Yet there is another Dylan song, also performed at Newport, that I believe best captures the strained kinship between Pop and folk: *Maggie’s Farm*, released on *Bringing It All Back Home* from March of that year. When Dylan declares that he doesn’t want to work on Maggie’s farm no more, the target of his boycott is multiple: it is a protest against the state, imperialist war, bourgeois society, his record company, and in typically self-referential fashion, the very same genre of protest folk that garnered him fame. It is difficult, if not impossible, to square Dylan’s blanket refusal in *Maggie’s Farm* with Warhol’s signature stance of cultural affirmation, his insistent “liking” of everything and everyone. To align these figures under the banner of a “dark carnival of allegory,” *pace* Crow, paints Warhol as a closet romantic modernist, Dylan a reluctant postmodernist, and risks conflating and misidentifying them both.

Instead of “the man,” *Maggie’s Farm* assigns ownership to Maggie, and in doing so suggests a gendered critique of mainstream institutions; though her extended family members (her brother, pa, and ma) act as subsidiaries, Maggie is the boss. Warhol too regarded mass culture as feminized, through his fascination with kitsch, domesticity, gossip, consumer goods, and Hollywood glamour, though his stance toward them was not so much oppositional as casually fetishistic, and affirmative—he liked it all.¹¹ In this sense, Maggie’s farm might be the rural equivalent of Warhol’s Factory. That said, pairing Warhol with his actual collaborators, such as the Velvet Underground or the Rolling Stones, or a gender/genre-bender such as David Bowie, would permit

gender and sexual (as well as race and class) identity to enter the discussion more fluidly than Dylan’s heterosexual, white, middle-class, Midwestern hipster-troubadour.

Let me return to an earlier coupling, which inadvertently frames the book’s political project: Warhol and Duschke. Whereas the latter represents the international Left’s struggle to rebuild in the wake of European fascism, the former’s working-class immigrant upbringing primed him to grasp the transformative, quasi-mystical power of the commodity form, his weapon of choice for the long march through the institution of fine art. Today, when both fascism’s return-of-the-repressed and post-Warholian, celebrity-saturated pop culture are invoked in equal measure to explain away the bizarre state of American electoral politics, Warhol and Duschke emerge as dialectical flip sides to the same populist coin. This is where Pop’s case-sensitivity, so to speak, matters most: Pop capitalized remains high art, whereas lower-case pop denotes the popular (in music and visual culture) and populist (in politics). Dispensing with both lower-case pop and Greenberg’s “umbilical cord of gold,” *The Long March’s* solution to art’s intractable maternal bond with capital is to keep Pop capitalized, while annexing it to folk and to allegory, historical categories that allow it retain a degree of relative autonomy.¹² More than fifty years later, it seems that Pop remains the allegorical X marking the spot where high-low distinctions begin to blur into illegibility—a process registered by the spectral, effaced, and, significantly, *blacked-out* portraiture of Warhol’s Marilyn Diptych (1962) far more violently and irrefutably than by the glittering sheen of his *Gold Marilyn Monroe*.

1. A week after King’s murder in early April, Duschke was shot by the anticommunist Josef Bachmann, and days before the second Kennedy brother was gunned down in early June, Valerie Solanas shot Warhol, badly wounding him in the chest. Though they survived the shootings, Duschke and Warhol both eventually succumbed to their injuries, in 1979 and 1987, respectively.
2. Crow frames his earlier essay on Warhol with an East-West Berlin mise-en-scène, foreshadowing *The Long March’s* unlikely pairing of Warhol and Duschke nearly thirty years later.
3. The relative paucity of blues recordings included in Smith’s *Anthology* is symptomatic of folk music’s hostility to any music that sounded polished or commercial. See Elijah Wald, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the*

Blues (New York: Amistad, 2004), 240. The link between African American vernacular culture and white audiences’ anticommmercial bias is a thread picked up later in this review.

4. This sentence, also quoted by Graham Bader in his superlative review of *The Long March* in *Bookforum*, appears in a section on Robert Indiana’s *Confederacy* series of paintings, which Crow highlights as exceptions that prove the rule of Pop’s “general refusal” to address race. By identifying this tendency without challenging it, *The Long March* echoes an earlier and similarly revisionist genealogy of (white) American cultural production that downplays, and even deliberately underestimates, the influence of African American vernacular culture: Dan Graham’s conceptual video essay *Rock My Religion*, which traces a genealogy of hardcore punk rock *not* back to rock ‘n’ roll’s explicitly African American roots, but rather, to the eighteenth-century English Protestant ecstatic religious sect, the Shakers. Like Crow, Graham also frames his argument via a peculiar coupling, that of the postmodern punk-poet Patti Smith and the Shaker visionary Ann Lee. For a brilliant critique of Graham’s work, see Kodwo Eshun, *Dan Graham: Rock My Religion* (London: MIT Press/Afterall, 2012).

5. Wald elaborates on white fans’ authenticity anxiety: “Then, as now, the work of poor black musicians had a natural outsider mystique. For white fans, an appreciation of black vernacular culture showed daring and individuality, as well as a virtuous respect for and solidarity with the downtrodden. Since, almost by definition, those musicians who were obviously, garishly successful were not outsiders, it is no accident that these groups routinely rejected the work of major important artists because they were simply too widely appreciated—though the same artists have been hailed as geniuses before they broke into the mass market, and might be hailed as geniuses again once their popularity failed.” Wald, 236.
6. Thomas Crow, “Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts,” rep. *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3.

7. For more on the relationship between allegory, postmodernism, and feminism, see the essays collected in Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
8. Notably, Crow’s chapter on Robert Indiana begins with *Moon* (1960), a wooden sculpture that immediately recalls Marisol’s anthropomorphic totems. Alloway regarded Marisol as “a sophisticated naive sculptor whose figures possess a folkloric decoration and fantasy that is quite unlike Pop art. The habitual self-references in her work also suggest an introspection allied to compulsive artists . . .” Lawrence Alloway, *American Pop Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1974), 23. Marisol was one of a handful of female Pop artists who were widely exhibited during the 1960s, though her relatively marginal status in art history has only recently been redressed by feminist scholars such as Kalliopi Minoudaki, as well as in a recent spate of exhibitions: *International Pop* (Philadelphia Museum

of Art) and *Global Pop* (Tate), both on view in 2016, and, from 2010, *Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists, 1958–1968* (University of the Arts, Philadelphia).

9. Elijah Wald’s new book, *Dylan Goes Electric!: Newport, Seeger, Dylan, and the Night That Split the Sixties* (New York: Dey Street Books, 2015), offers a necessary demystification of Dylan’s legendary performance and the ensuing media fallout.
10. Dylan’s persona during this period is captured in D. A. Pennebaker’s *Dont Look Back* (1967), a film examined in close detail in David E. James, *Rock ‘n’ Film: Cinema’s Dance with Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). Besides Dylan’s widely documented Newport performance, Seth Kim-Cohen points to Muddy Waters’s first electric guitar recording in 1948, “I Feel Like Going Home,” as an even more pivotal event in the intersecting histories of modernist aesthetics, mass culture, and vernacular music. See chapter 1 in Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* (New York: Continuum Books, 2009).

11. The politics of Warhol’s liking is explored in Jonathan Flatley, “Like: Collecting and Collectivity,” *October* 132 (Spring 2010): 71–98.
12. Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” *Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (1939): 38.

Johanna Gosse is a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the department of art history and archaeology at Columbia University. Her research focuses on postwar American art and experimental film and media. She is currently at work on a book about Ray Johnson and network aesthetics, which was awarded a 2015 Arts Writers Grant by Creative Capital and the Andy Warhol Foundation.

Eve Meltzer To Conjure Hesse

Eva Hesse. Marcie Begleiter, director. 2016. With Tom Doyle and the voices of Bob Balaban, Selma Blair, and Patrick Kennedy. New York: BDKS Productions, dist. Zeitgeist Films, New York (English language version), and Real Fiction, Cologne (German language version), 2016. Digital film, b/w and col. footage, 108 min. In release. For information on educational and institutional rentals, purchases, and streaming licenses, see <https://zeitgeistfilms.com/film/evahesse#edu>. Trailer: <https://zeitgeistfilms.com/film/evahesse>

Whenever a proper name is used to represent an individual and, at once, her or his life’s work, an inescapable difficulty comes with it. Does the name point to the artist or does it call up a body of work? As we look and listen, our attention shuttles back and forth, at times resisting and at times succumbing to the suggestion that the artist and the work are uncomplicatedly tethered, mutually referring, back and forth, back and forth. *Basquiat* (1996). *Pollock* (2000). *Frida* (2002). *Sol LeWitt* (2014). *Eva Hesse* (2016). These films—and so many more—take very different approaches to their renderings of very distinct lives, and not all set out to picture equally both artist and work. Still, in each case, the film—its title alone—seems to want to tell the story, or at least a story of an artist, his or her world, and his or her work. Under one name, then, comingle many things.

Eva Hesse is the first feature-length film on the artist Eva Hesse (1936–1970), whose Postminimalist artwork from the 1960s emerged as strikingly original against the backdrop of other artists among whom she worked, particularly those of Minimalist and Pop persuasions. By the late 1960s, critics, collectors, and art institutions internationally acknowledged how unusual and bold her work had become. “As absolutely original as it was,” comments the writer and storyteller Gioia Timpanelli in the film, “it was incredibly reflective of our time, of all time. And of real feeling.” The filmic approach of Marcie Begleiter, the director of the new documentary and, with Karen Shapiro and Michael Aust, its coproducer, effectively captures the central conjunctions of frailty