

a sophisticate's repudiation of Campbell's. Even when it came to canned soup, he talked about how the esoteric Mock Turtle flavor was his favorite, "but I must have been the only one buying it because they discontinued it." And toward the end of his life he once again credited his mother as his cans' inspiration but this time without any mention of soup. Instead he cited the flowers that she made out of empty peach tins and sold door-to-door during the Great Depression—an interesting idea if only because there's a painting of a can of Del Monte peaches that seems to predate Warhol's more famous Campbell's images.

The key to understanding the importance of the Campbell's products for Warhol may be less about biography than ubiquity—Latow's "something that's recognizable to almost everybody." Soups might have replaced peaches in Warhol's art and reputation because they were better known, not because they meant more to him. In a Hollywood thriller from 1957, a man tells his dinner date that he's an artist, and she asks, "Soup cans or sunsets?"—with soup cans clearly standing in for all of commercial art. "Soup cans, toothpaste, automobiles" is his answer. About a year before Warhol's first soup works, the publisher Bennett Cerf—who would release a Pop book by Warhol within a few years—wrote a comic newspaper column asking, "The nation's favorite beverage? Is it beer? corn liker? soda pop? No sir, it's soup. . . . Over ten billion bowlfuls of soup were purchased by America's housewives in 1959." Scholar Anthony Grudin has shown how, just around then, famous brands like Campbell's were being retargeted away from elites and toward the working class: "Working class families today are reaching out for the American Dream. . . . They want 'all the good things of life' their Depression-wracked parents could never provide," said one period study on brand advertising.

If Warhol wanted a "recognizable" product of certifiably popular culture to turn into fancy art, Campbell's Soup seemed likely to beat even Superman and Popeye and to get him out from under the shadow of Lichtenstein at the same time. As Grudin has pointed out, being the limner of Campbell's let Warhol construct a working-class connection for himself and his art. That was of a piece with the common-man, Andy Paperbag persona he never really let go of, even when he was appealing to, and running with, the country's highest stratum; it also communicated the left-wing sympathies that Warhol always had, and that were de rigueur among the most serious thinkers of his generation.

The Campbell's can had one other virtue for Warhol at this particular moment: It meshed nicely with the camp, 1950s aesthetic he had yet to shed. The Campbell's label, launched in 1898, fit camp's nostalgic tastes: Both label

and *Sculpture 1961–1963: Warhol 01—The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Phaidon, 2002), 61.

183. **228 “Soup cans or sunsets?”**: This is the line of a character in Jacques Tourneur, *Nightfall*, feature film, 1957. Thanks to Arturo Silva for drawing my attention to this passage.
184. **228 “nation’s favorite beverage?”**: Bennett Cerf, “Bennett Cerf’s Cerfboard: We’re in the Soup,” *Syracuse Post Standard*, April 3, 1960. Thomas Kiedrowski first brought this article to my attention.
185. **228 “reaching out for the American Dream”**: Anthony Grudin cites a 1962 text by the McFadden publishing group that was aggressively targeting the working class at the time—see his *Warhol’s Working Class: Pop Art and Egalitarianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 91.
186. **228 label and price**: Kirk Varnedoe, “Campbell’s Soup Cans, 1962,” in *Andy Warhol: Retrospective*, ed. Heiner Bastian (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), 42.
187. **228 “East Side faggots”**: Mario Amaya, in John Wilcock, ed., *The Autobiography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol* (New York: Trela, 2010), 21.
188. **228 the letters C-A-M-P**: The drawing, in the collection of Paul Kasmin, was on view in “Andy Warhol: By Hand” at the New York Academy of Art, January 22 to March 10, 2019.

Even toward the end of the decade, the gay connotations of Warhol’s cans could be taken for granted in a speech that the avant-garde playwright LeRoi Jones gave at a Black Panther rally, proclaiming that black children should not be allowed to grow up “to paint Campbell’s Soup cans. . . . to think that somehow the celebration of homosexuality is aesthetic and profound”—see Neil Printz, “Other Voices, Other Rooms: Between Andy Warhol and Truman Capote, 1948–1961” (Ph.D., New York University, 2000), 12.

189. **228 “the synthesis of nothingness”**: Bert Greene, reporting a conversation between Warhol and Aaron Fine, in Patrick S. Smith, ed., *Warhol: Conversations About the Artist*, Studies in the Fine Arts, no. 59 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), 40.

Ronald Tavel reports the same conversation between Warhol and Fine, but it’s most likely that he’s simply recalling what he’d read in Smith—http://www.ronaldtavel.com/documents/shower_screen.pdf, accessed May 17, 2017.

190. **229 AbEx “hullabaloo”**: Frank Stella, in William Rubin, *Frank Stella* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 13.