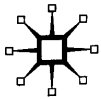


**THE \$12
MILLION
STUFFED
SHARK**

THE CURIOUS
ECONOMICS OF
CONTEMPORARY ART

Don Thompson

palgrave
macmillan



THE \$12 MILLION STUFFED SHARK
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WARHOL, KOONS, AND EMIN

*It is a great paradox of our times that visual culture
should be vanishing even as the art market soars.
Abstract concepts take precedence over what the eye sees.*

*Artists' names matter ever more, and the art to
which they are attached ever less.*

Souren Melikian, art journalist

*Jeff Koons made banality blue chip,
pornography avant-garde, and tchotchkes into trophy art,
with the support of a small circle of dealers and collectors.*

Kelly Devine Thomas, art journalist

Damien Hirst has generated publicity and high prices for the nature of his art, and for his brilliant titles. Other artists generate high prices for being innovative, for being great draftspersons, for being celebrities, for being controversial, and for being sexy and controversial. Each can help establish a successful brand. The artist as celebrity is exemplified by Andy Warhol. The artist as controversial figure could be Jeff Koons. Sexy and controversial is Tracey Emin. In becoming branded, each artist has established a role in popular culture, which has translated into high prices in galleries and at auctions.

The idea of artist-as-celebrity may seem strange, but it is just an extension of the superstar concept in music, movies, or sport. Every cultural activity has celebrities

who become superstars. Celebrity status can be achieved through marketing and resulting well-knownness as well as through professional skill: think of Paris Hilton or Anna Kournikova.

The modern phenomenon of the artist-as-celebrity began in early 1960s New York, when Jasper Johns, James Rosenquist, and Roy Lichtenstein were promoted by dealers Leo Castelli, Betty Parsons, and Charles Egan. Andy Warhol is a later and hugely more successful example. Twenty years after his death, Warhol is the second most actively traded artist in the world after Pablo Picasso. In 2006, 1,010 Warhol works with a total value of \$199 million were sold at auction—five a day, every working day of the year. Forty-three of those works sold for over \$1 million each—four more than Picasso. As with Hirst, most of Warhol's art was produced by technicians.

His work is known for reflecting the culture of late twentieth-century American, but his principal product was “Andy.” He created a brand that the press still loves and young artists still revere.

Andrew Warhola was born in 1928 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the youngest of three sons of Czech immigrant, working-class parents. He dropped the final “a” from his name when he graduated from the Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1949 and moved to New York for a career as an illustrator and graphic designer. In the early 1960s he began painting what was later called Pop Art, but no one would take him seriously. His early marketing efforts included presenting his work to Leo Castelli, who rejected it as unoriginal. He then tried to donate a *Shoe* drawing to the Museum of Modern Art; the museum returned it.

In 1962 Warhol completed thirty-two hand-painted images of Campbell's soup cans, offered for sale at \$100 each by Irving Blum, legendary director of the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. The *Campbell's Soup Cans* exhibition got Warhol his first media publicity, mostly due to Blum's influence. The paintings were displayed on white shelves that ran along the perimeter of the gallery, suggesting the layout of a grocery store. A rival gallery across the street helped by stacking actual soup cans in their display window with a sign: “We have the real thing, only 29 cents.”

There are varying accounts of what happened next. One version of the story is that after just six paintings were sold at \$100 each, one to actor Dennis Hopper, Blum had the sudden inspiration that the set should be kept intact, called the purchasers and bought them back. He then offered Warhol \$1,000 for all thirty-two, payable at \$100 a month for ten months. In a second version none of the paintings actually sold, and Blum, who had committed to Warhol that he would sell the whole set, negotiated the \$1,000 price.

In 1985 a Japanese agent offered \$16 million for the thirty-two can set. Blum countered with a request for \$18 million and the sale fell through. In 1995 Blum sold the set to the MoMA for \$14.5 million.

There have been many theories as to why Warhol painted soup cans. Warhol said that packaged food was a legitimate subject for a generation fixated on business. He added that the real question was whether his own preference was tomato or chicken noodle, thus which was the more valuable silkscreen.

Many of Warhol's critics have said the soup cans were his most important contribution to contemporary art, that once the concept of the can went from the shelf to the gallery wall “You would never see an ad in the same way, ever again.” The soup cans were the beginning of the artistic concept of commodification.

Warhol later made individual examples such as *Small Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Pepper Pot)* (illustrated), tracing the images directly from photographs and hand-painting within his penciled marks. On *Pepper Pot* the pencil marks are still visible; this is thought to be intentional. The soup can series helped Warhol to focus on what the media would publicize. *Pepper Pot* was purchased by Los Angeles industrialist and collector Eli Broad—co-founder of house builder Kaufman & Broad and of investment firm SunAmerica and ranked by *Forbes* as the forty-second richest American—at Christie's New York in May 2006, for \$11.8 million. His wife Edythe, sitting beside him but unaware that he was bidding, is said to have grumbled, “What dumb idiot bought that?,” to chuckles from those within earshot.

Later in 1962 Warhol began making silkscreen prints of celebrities: Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Elvis Presley, and Jackie Kennedy. The images were based on studio publicity photos. Production involved the transfer of the blown-up photos onto canvas, in multiple images and different color combinations. Each frame was modified with brush strokes or blurring to create a sequence of slightly different images. Many of Warhol's silkscreen celebrities were portrayed as tragic: Monroe after her death, Elizabeth Taylor involved in battles with substance abuse, and Jackie Kennedy before and after the death of her president-husband.

As these images produced publicity for Warhol, he began to tackle more difficult subjects by reproducing actual disasters. *Five Deaths* from 1963 shows a car of teenage crash victims in party dresses. *Tunafish Disaster* portrays the housewife victims of tainted tuna. His most reproduced disaster silkscreen is *1947 White*, a news photograph of a fashion model who jumped from the Empire State Building and landed on the roof of a diplomatic limousine. By the end of the 1960s, Warhol's subject matter and personality were more newsworthy than his art.

Having achieved celebrity, Warhol switched back to silkscreen portrayals of consumer goods: Coca-Cola, Brillo Pads, and more Campbell's soup cans. In 1963 he moved his studio to a larger space and called it The Factory, implying that art could be produced on an assembly line, like commercial products. Paul Morrissey, a filmmaker at The Factory, called it The Andy Warhol Industrial Complex.

For a while in the 1970s, his work was out of fashion. Two consecutive shows, *Dollar Sign* and *Hammer and Sickle*, each sold nothing. Warhol supported The Factory by doing portrait commissions. For a fee of \$25,000 he would produce an original portrait, dedicated to making the sitter look glamorous. Warhol's friend Chris Makos described the portraits as involving facelifts and nose jobs. "I don't know if Mrs. Dusseldorf knew she was getting Liza Minnelli's lips but they sure made her look better." His commercial portraits were derided by other artists, but gave his clients idealized images of themselves.

Warhol signed the work when the client picked it up in the studio, beside celebrity portraits of Mick Jagger, Liza Minnelli, and Rudolph Nureyev. The word-of-mouth promotion that resulted produced more commissions. Warhol completed a thousand portraits in his career, more than the lifetime output of many artists. Each work took about a day to complete. His portrait fee rose to \$40,000 in the 1980s.

Warhol initially employed assistants to turn commercial photos into silkscreen multiples, but later contracted out the work to local printers. As he explained, "Paintings are too hard; the things I want to show are mechanical." Warhol understood the authentication problems caused by his contracting-out: "I think it would be great if more people took up silkscreens so that no one would know whether my picture was mine or somebody else's."

In the first decade of the twentieth century, long after his death, the Andy Warhol Authentication Board has exactly that problem—judging which works are authentic Warhols. The question is not whether a work is fake or original, nor whether his hand ever touched the work. It is the "presence of the artist," whether Warhol at least saw the work and approved it on its way to his dealer. Scholars disagree on even that criterion; they make the point that it was exactly the practice of blurring authorship and using mass production that produced his place in art history. This has resulted in chaos for collectors and dealers trying to understand what is authentic. Some pictures received directly from Warhol have been rejected by the Board. It has also rejected works previously authenticated by representatives of the Andy Warhol Foundation, and in some cases it has reversed its own previous opinions.

The Board never officially explains why it denies authenticity, which has led to claims of a conflict of interest. The Authentication Board is paid by, and reports to, the Andy Warhol Foundation, which on the artist's death acquired 4,100 paintings and sculptures. The Foundation releases \$15 to \$20 million of work each year to auction and to a few selected dealers such as Gagosian. Warhol's highest-quality work, and early work like the "disaster series," is in short supply. Other works exist in quantity. It will take thirty years for the market to absorb the best quality work currently held by the Foundation. There are at least fifty *Little Electric Chair* paintings and silkscreens in existence, and more than a hundred electric chair works in total.

In July 2007, Joe Simon-Whelan, the owner of a 1964 Warhol self-portrait, filed a class-action, antitrust lawsuit in federal district court in New York against the Warhol estate, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the Authentication Board. The Board had rejected the portrait on two occasions, even though Simon-Whelan claimed it had earlier been authenticated by Warhol's business manager, Frederick Hughes. The suit alleges that the defendants monopolize the market for Warhol works, and was filed as a class action so that the owners of Warhols could join in a single lawsuit. If the Foundation and Authentication Board lose, damages could be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, and the judgement might lead to hundreds or thousands of other Warhols being brought forward for authentication and offered at auction.

The number of Warhols has not detracted from his importance in the contemporary art market, or from his high prices. The work produced between 1962 and 1967—the soup cans, celebrities, disasters, and self-portraits—is widely regarded as genius and as responsible for altering the course of modern art. These works fetch the highest prices.

For almost a decade, Warhol's auction record was the 1964 silkscreen *Orange Marilyn*, sold by Sotheby's in 1998 for \$17.3 million. Three works had sold privately for between \$25 and \$28 million: the 1961 *Dick Tracy and Sam Ketchum* was bought by New York financier Henry Kravis from David Geffen, and the 1960 *Superman* by Steve Cohen, both sales brokered by Larry Gagosian. *Four Race Riots* was sold through New York's Acquavella Gallery.

Then in May 2007 his auction price record exploded. As described earlier, *Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I)* was offered at Christie's New York with an estimate of \$25 to \$35 million, and sold for \$71.7 million—four times the previous record for a Warhol. *Green Car* shows repeated images of an overturned burning

car. Part of its value came from collectors' concern about "last chance." Warhol created five car-crash silkscreens between 1962 and 1964 for his disaster series. Three are in museums, and the fourth is much smaller.

The 1964 Marilyn silkscreens included a series called *Shot*, another example of Warhol marketing. Shortly after a set of Marilyn silkscreens was produced, a friend of Andy's named Dorothy Podber showed up and asked if she could shoot one. Andy said yes, and was stunned when she drew a gun and drilled a hole through the forehead of the first in the pile—and two others stacked behind. Rather than discarding the three and starting again, Warhol publicized the story, had the works restored, renamed the series *Shot Red Marilyn*, and raised prices. In later auctions the *Shot Red* works brought double the price of other *Marilyn* silkscreens.

Warhol denied that there was any social criticism intended in his work. The question focused on the *Electric Chair* series of paintings and silkscreens. Although not identified in the work, the electric chair in the photograph Warhol used is the one in which Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed in 1953 for passing nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union. There were debates over whether the three doors shown represented the goals of criminal justice—retribution, imprisonment, and deterrence—or whether they represented heaven, purgatory, and hell. Warhol insisted, "No meaning, no meaning," a denial likely intended as another form of marketing.

All his life, Warhol worked on perfecting an androgynous look. In 1981, at the age of fifty-three, he started to do fashion modeling, first for the Zoli Agency and then for the Ford Modeling Agency. In 1986 he appeared in commercials for a financial services company, sitting in front of his own 1986 *Fright Wig Self-Portrait*, with the caption "I thought I was too small for Drexel Burnham" (illustrated). Drexel claimed that the Warhol ads were not run to attract business, but to add an element of cool to their image, and to make employees feel better about where they worked. Warhol tried unsuccessfully to convince the company to adopt his dollar sign silkscreen as the Drexel Burnham symbol.

Just before the Burnham commercial, one branded collector rediscovered Warhol and began to quietly buy up his work—and then went public in purchasing a *Triple Elvis* at Sotheby's for \$125,000. The buying was noticed, and when Larry Gagosian showed the *Oxidation Paintings*, made by urinating on canvases covered with ferrous oxide, other branded collectors—Thomas Ammann and Asher Edelman—bought, and others followed. The original branded buyer? Charles Saatchi.

Warhol died on February 22, 1987 of postoperative complications following routine gall bladder surgery. One of his last public statements was: "Death means a lot of money; death makes you a star." It did. During his lifetime he never received more than \$50,000 for a work, although several of his earlier works had sold for more at auction. This was at a time when Roy Lichtenstein and Robert Rauschenberg were getting five times as much. Warhol's fame grew after his death and with it, the prices paid for his art.

Awareness of the Warhol brand was such that, three years after his death, Andy's brother Paul Warhola mounted an exhibition of posters of a can of Heinz vegetarian beans, priced at \$550 and signed "Andy Warhol's brother Paul." Warhola had spent his working life as a scrap metal dealer and chicken farmer and had no particular talent for art. Instead he used Andy's technique of silkscreening from a photograph. The bean cans sold. Paul next created his own signature works of art, made by dipping chicken feet in acrylic paint and walking them over a canvas. That edition sold out at \$5,500. He then offered a line of Warhola T-shirts.

Warhol's legacy has continued to grow in parallel with his prices at auction. In mid-2006 there was a large Warhol show in Moscow and a simultaneous show, curated by film director David Cronenberg, at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. Two documentary films were released: the widely panned *Factory Girl*, in which Sienna Miller plays Warhol's muse Edie Sedgwick; and a four-hour documentary on his work by Ric Burns. Two new books were published; one, *Andy Warhol Giant Size*, had two thousand illustrations and weighed fifteen pounds. No other artist of his era comes even close to this kind of celebrity.

The Andy Warhol Foundation profits by licensing his work for almost any purpose. Snowboard manufacturer Burton produced a limited edition collection of boards, boots, and bindings featuring Warhol dollar signs, self-portraits, flower pictures, and portraits of Edie Sedgwick. In December 2006, Barney's department store in New York offered limited edition Campbell's Tomato Soup cans, containing condensed soup and bearing replica labels in the colors of Warhol's original art. A set of four cans cost \$48, of which \$12 went to the Foundation.

If Warhol is the next Pablo Picasso (a strange comparison but a common auction house claim), then Jeff Koons is claimed as the successor to Warhol. Koons followed Warhol, and took artist self-marketing to a new level. Jeff Koons is a fifty-two-year-old American from York, Pennsylvania who came to New York in his twenties as an unknown artist, had a breakthrough exhibition in the East Village in 1985, and today lives in a thirteen-room townhouse on Manhattan's Upper East

Side. You may have read about or even seen one of his works, a 44-ton, 43-foot tall West Highland terrier in long-term residence in downtown Manhattan.

Koons is both an art world brand and legend. He has been called the Ronald Reagan of sculpture; Teflon coated, and bland in the same way a fox is bland. Like Warhol and Hirst, his work is created by technicians under his supervision. Through a career that started with selling memberships at the Museum of Modern Art (“I was the most successful salesman in the Museum’s history—I brought in \$3 million a year”), and continued when he financed his artistic career by working as a Wall Street commodities broker for five years, Koons acquired a great instinct for self-promotion. He has retained the concept of art as a commodity to be promoted. He uses Wall Street phrases that elicit horror in the art community like “increasing my market share,” to describe why he places work in so many gallery shows, and “the great artists are going to be the great negotiators.”

Most of Koons’ work is industrial sculpture and installation. He first became famous for exhibiting manufactured products such as *New Hoover, Deluxe Shampoo Polisher* (illustrated), a shampoo polisher in a vitrine. By moving such objects as polishers and vacuum cleaners from the department store to the gallery he re-contextualized them, as Warhol did with soup cans.

On May 15, 2001 a sculpture by Koons of pop star Michael Jackson and his pet monkey Bubbles, three feet tall and six feet long, was sold at Sotheby’s contemporary art auction in New York. Koons claims this is the largest porcelain piece ever produced. *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* was created in 1988 from a publicity photograph. Like all Koons’ sculpture, *Michael Jackson* has perfect casting and glowing surfaces. The sculpture was sold to Norwegian shipping owner Hans Rasmus Astrup for \$5.6 million, at the time a record auction price for any living sculptor. That is a higher price than August Rodin, Henry Moore, or Constantin Brancusi—the latter considered the greatest sculptor of the twentieth century—received for any work during their lifetimes.

Normally the fact that there were two other identical casts of *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* would have limited its price at auction. Sotheby’s turned this around by identifying the owners of the other versions as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Greek collector Dakis Joannou. “To join such an attractive family warrants a premium,” said Sotheby’s, and they got one. Astrup donated the sculpture to the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art in Oslo.

Koons’ other work includes a ten foot tall, stainless-steel *Balloon Dog* that weighs one ton; basketballs suspended in a fish tank; a vacuum cleaner with fluorescent

lamp which mounts on a wall; and *Pink Panther*, a porcelain sculpture of the movie character in the arms of a buxom blonde. When he needed a little media promotion, Koons volunteered that *Panther* was about masturbation: “I don’t know what she would be doing with the *Pink Panther* other than taking it home to masturbate with.” The media raced to report the meaning of the new work, with pictures.

Pink Panther (illustrated), one of an edition of three plus an artist’s proof, was sold at Christie’s in 1998 for \$1.8 million. To generate publicity, the auction house offered actors strutting around in *Pink Panther* costumes, accompanied by rock music. The auction price was four times that of any previous Koons work.

In 1991 Koons married Ilona Staller, known as La Cicciolina, a Hungarian-born pornography star and member of the Italian parliament. He said, “Ilona and I were born for each other. She’s a media woman, I’m a media man.” Koons turned their relationship into a sculpture and painting series depicting them in a variety of lovemaking positions—as poodle and sheepdog and as Adam and Eve.

One work, titled *Red Butt*, is a 90 in × 60 in silkscreen depicting the artist having anal sex with La Cicciolina. In 2003, Christie’s sold one of the four versions of *Red Butt* for \$369,000; there were nine bidders. The sale catalogue continued the marketing hype that accompanies Koons, by placing the illustration behind a fold-out panel with a warning label: “The Following Image Contains Graphic Sexual Content.”

Staller left Koons in 1993, taking their son Ludwig to Italy after a long and expensive legal battle. Koons then created the *Celebration* series; seventy-five artisans worked on the 1996 show at the Guggenheim. Koons said: “I’m basically the idea person. I’m not physically involved in the production. I don’t have the necessary abilities, so I go to the top people, whether I’m working with my foundry—Tallix—or in physics.” The best known work from *Celebration* is *Hanging Heart (Magenta/Gold)*, which is just that—a 3,600 pound, stainless steel heart intended to be suspended from a ceiling. It was originally purchased in 2003 while still under construction by collector Adam Lindemann. He offered it at Sotheby’s New York in 2007 with an estimate of \$15 to 20 million. Larry Gagosian was the successful bidder at \$23.6 million, reportedly on behalf of Ukrainian oligarch Victor Pinchuk, with the price setting a record for any work by a living artist. The record had been held for the previous seven months by Damien Hirst.

While Koons is generally regarded as doing his best work in three dimensions, he also produces paintings. Produces is the right term; like Warhol, he seldom

touches a paint brush, but he controls each step in the industrial process of producing computer-based images. As with Warhol and later Hirst, many artisans work on each painting.

Some critics praise Koons' work, some ridicule it. Koons has claimed that his work treats profound issues of conscience, to which critic Robert Hughes responds: "If Jeff Koons' work is about class struggle, I am Maria of Romania." Historian Robert Pincus-Witten said, "Jeff recognizes that works of art in a capitalist culture inevitably are reduced to the condition of commodity. What Jeff did was say, 'Let's short-circuit the process. Let's begin with the commodity.'"

Koons has had an enormous influence on other artists. Damien Hirst put objects in vitrines after Koons did, and had technicians make photorealist paintings as Koons had.

Dealers admire Koons, in part because he is so good at reaching his target market, which he defines as "really rich collectors." Auction specialists in contemporary art love his work and want one piece in every major contemporary art auction, because the work attracts media attention. Koons' astronomical prices make other auction items appear pretty reasonable.

The first work in each of his series is placed with a museum or with a branded collector, often at a discount. The sale is usually negotiated by his dealer, before the work is completed. Subsequent work in the series is marketed with the dealer's announcement that "Saatchi, or Broad, or Pinault, or the Museum" has one.

Koons tirelessly promotes himself as a celebrity. Ads for his gallery exhibitions feature photos of himself posing like a teenage rock star, surrounded by bikini-clad girls. He is probably the only artist other than Andy Warhol and Salvador Dali to have held autograph signings. Articles about his work and his life have appeared in *Vanity Fair*, *People*, *Time*, *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Playboy*. Koons produces wonderful quotes: "Debasement is what gives the bourgeois freedom" and "Abstraction and luxury are the guard dogs of the upper class."

Puppy, the forty-three-foot high, forty-four-ton West Highland terrier sculpture (illustrated) mentioned earlier, was first installed outside the Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain, where Basque terrorists threatened to blow it up. In 2006 it was moved to the front of the General Electric building in New York. It is made from stainless steel, with seventy thousand petunias, marigolds, and begonias in twenty-three tons of soil. New Yorkers have turned it into a weekend destination trip. Critic Jerry Saltz says, "It is the rare work of art that laymen can talk about with the same degree of confidence and authority that those in the art world bring to it."

Why a West Highland terrier? Saltz says that it is a Koons self-portrait; the breed "wants to be loved, is spunky, extremely intelligent, affectionate, independent, barks a lot, and was bred to hunt and kill small creatures. Except for that last bit, it sounds a lot like Koons."

Today Koons works in a studio in Chelsea in New York, where he employs eighty-two people. Like Warhol, he runs what is essentially an industrial process. He seldom contributes to painting or casting, but controls each step of his technicians' work. His next project is a full-size reproduction of a Baldwin locomotive to be suspended above the entrance to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The Baldwin locomotive has a unique history in the United States. In 1831, jeweler Matthias Baldwin built a miniature locomotive for exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum. The design was so popular that a few months after the model went on display, he received an order from a railway company for an actual locomotive, built to look like the model. Baldwin found partners, and opened the Baldwin locomotive works.

The most recognizable living British artist is not Damien Hirst, but rather Tracey Emin, a very attractive woman who enhanced her branding through self-promotion and bad-girl packaging. Emin first became known for the frank sexual revelation of her confessional works. *My Bed* (illustrated), shown in 1999, has as its themes fertility, copulation, and death. After the Turner Prize ceremony in 1997 Emin was at a party and complaining that she had foregone a £500 fee for appearing on a television show that evening. The next morning every newspaper reported that Emin had been on the show, but so drunk that she could not remember it. That drunken appearance did as much as anything to launch her career as a bad-girl artist.

Emin then posed for Bombay Gin advertisements. Emin's face was shown next to a bottle of Bombay Gin, with the caption "Bad Girls Like Bombay Gin." In 2000 she posed nude for Beck's Beer. Neither ad had to identify Emin. How many contemporary artists can the reader identify by their pictures—even fully clothed? Andy Warhol, but who else?

These ads featuring Emin associate her with a commercial product, as an endorsement by a football star would. The advertising and promotion of the product reinforce the artist's brand. A more recent example is *International Woman*, a limited edition of bags produced for Paris luggage label Longchamp. The bags are a take-off on Emin's best-known work, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With*, a tent embroidered with names of her past lovers. The tent was illustrated and discussed in

the press after being destroyed in a London art warehouse fire in the spring of 2004. Longchamp seized on this fame with catchy Emin phrases—*Me Every Time*, *You Said You Love Me*, and *Moments of Love*—sewn on each special-edition bag (illustrated). Longchamp only sells the bag in England, and promotes it not because it sells well (it is priced at four times the price of an equivalent leather bag), but to add an element of cool to the rest of the Longchamp line.

Tracey Emin is a serious artist. In August 2006 she was chosen to represent Britain at the 2007 Venice Biennale. The Biennale is the pinnacle of the art exhibition world, the most important of about sixty biennales and triennales held around the world each year. For Venice, ninety countries nominate individual artists to create exhibitions. Being selected is a little like a soprano being offered a lead role at La Scala. Emin's choice was vindicated by the great critical reception she received at the Biennale—although she almost lost her audience when curator Andrea Rosen introduced her work as “ladylike.”

True, her in-your-face bad-girl sexuality had been replaced by more subtle and intimate confessions, including a work at Venice titled *Abortion: How It Feels Now*, which combined her own writing and a series of watercolors revealing her vulnerability. But in the spirit of the old Tracey Emin, there were also a series of small drawings showing a female with a variety of phallic assailants. In one, a nude female body is suspended upside down. The inscription reads “studio,” which is crossed out and replaced with “stupid girl.” One work is called *Hades, Hades, Hades*, another *Dark, Dark, Dark*. The *Observer* (London) reported that Emin had produced sixty of the drawings in five hours. No one thought this of much significance, in particular the Museum of Modern Art; Emin's publicist announced that MoMA had put a reserve on thirty of the drawings. Emin and the Venice Biennale are both big brands.

Warhol, Koons, and Emin are great examples of “You are nobody in contemporary art until somebody brands you.” Or until you brand yourself, at which time the world's major newspapers and art magazines will feature your *Pink Panther* sculpture and promote it as something to be taken home to masturbate with, a bargain at only \$1.8 million.