Has kitsch eradicated Nature? The fact that the Sublime has taken kitsch for its object in late 20th century artistic production seems to indicate that this is indeed the case. Using Warhol’s *THE Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* as exemplary, this essay explores the ramifications, reverberations, earthquakes and aftershocks that result when Warhol ushers in an era in which kitsch usurps the places previously occupied by art and self. In obliterating nature, kitsch installs itself as supreme object (and, in the case of personality, supreme subject). Paying close attention to Warhol’s ambivalence to sublimity – it might happen, or it might not; it might happen, and we may be bored by it; it might happen, and we might not notice it – I identify and isolate the Postmodern Sublime as a pulsation or *Tingle*: i.e. an indeterminate oscillation between the two poles of sublimity and mundanity. Reading Arthur Danto’s art criticism *à rebours* – against the grain – I find within it an admission that the manufactured object may transport one to the edge of paradise: hence the ecstasy of kitsch, our mania for producing it, consuming it, living it.

A: You take some chocolate...and you take two pieces of bread … and you put the candy in the middle and you make a sandwich of it. And that would be cake.


But a light now appearing, and now leaving us, and so off and on, is even more terrible than total darkness; and a sort of uncertain sounds are, when the necessary dispositions concur, more alarming than a total silence.


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It is the ambivalence with which Warhol regards sublimity that gives his work the *élan vital* and ebullience which make it the gateway to Postmodernism: ambivalent with respect to two of the more dominant and influential ways in which sublimity has historically been formulated.
in the West, the incarnational Christian tradition of immanent transcendence and the Nature-centered Burkean-Romantic tradition of the sadomasochistic pleasure associated with terror.¹ The selfhood which is produced along with the work of art proper and which is itself the ground of the art object is turned back upon itself in Warhol, whose performativity culminates in the proliferation of selves which challenges concepts of ‘Naturalness,’ novelty, originality and longevity and which replaces the serious self of the Romantics and the Moderns and the id-assaulted self of Freud with the Wildely un-Natural, kitschy, playful self of Pop and post-Pop.² Central to Warhol’s revision of selves and works of art in accord with principles of bricolage, pastiche and irony is the movement from mundanity to sublimity and back again; the subtitle of Warhol’s quintessential work THE Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again) makes this oscillation abundantly clear, as it is the movement to and from sublimity which constitutes the nerve-center of Warhol’s works, personalities and performances. At one level, A and B denote people:

“I wake up and call B.
B is anybody who helps me kill time.
B is anybody and I’m nobody. B and I.
I need B because I can’t be alone.
Except when I sleep. Then I can’t be with anybody.

¹ Of course by laying this out as my schema, I am ‘dissing’ Kant. I do not entirely mean to do this; since my intention throughout this essay is not to write an epistemological account of the sublime, I have selected as my focus accounts of sublimity which privilege sensation and not the ‘rational’ machinations which, post-sensation, the psyche must undergo in order to process sublimity and, pace Kant, convert imaginative failure to noetic success. Hence, my diss.

² For example: see the many recent examples of artists playing with canonization. Jeff Koons has been the one post-Warholian artist who has best understood secular sainthood; his comment “Jeff Koons is a victim, and I hope that everyone is a victim” is profound for this reason, as is his identification of his self-consciously cute/hideous Puppy as “a contemporary Sacred Heart of Jesus” (see The Jeff Koons Handbook). Pierre et Gilles have also been precocious on this point; their stylized and faux-Catholic photographs of celebrities posing as martyred saints reveal an understanding of what it means to be the analogue of a ‘saint’ in the postmodern world.