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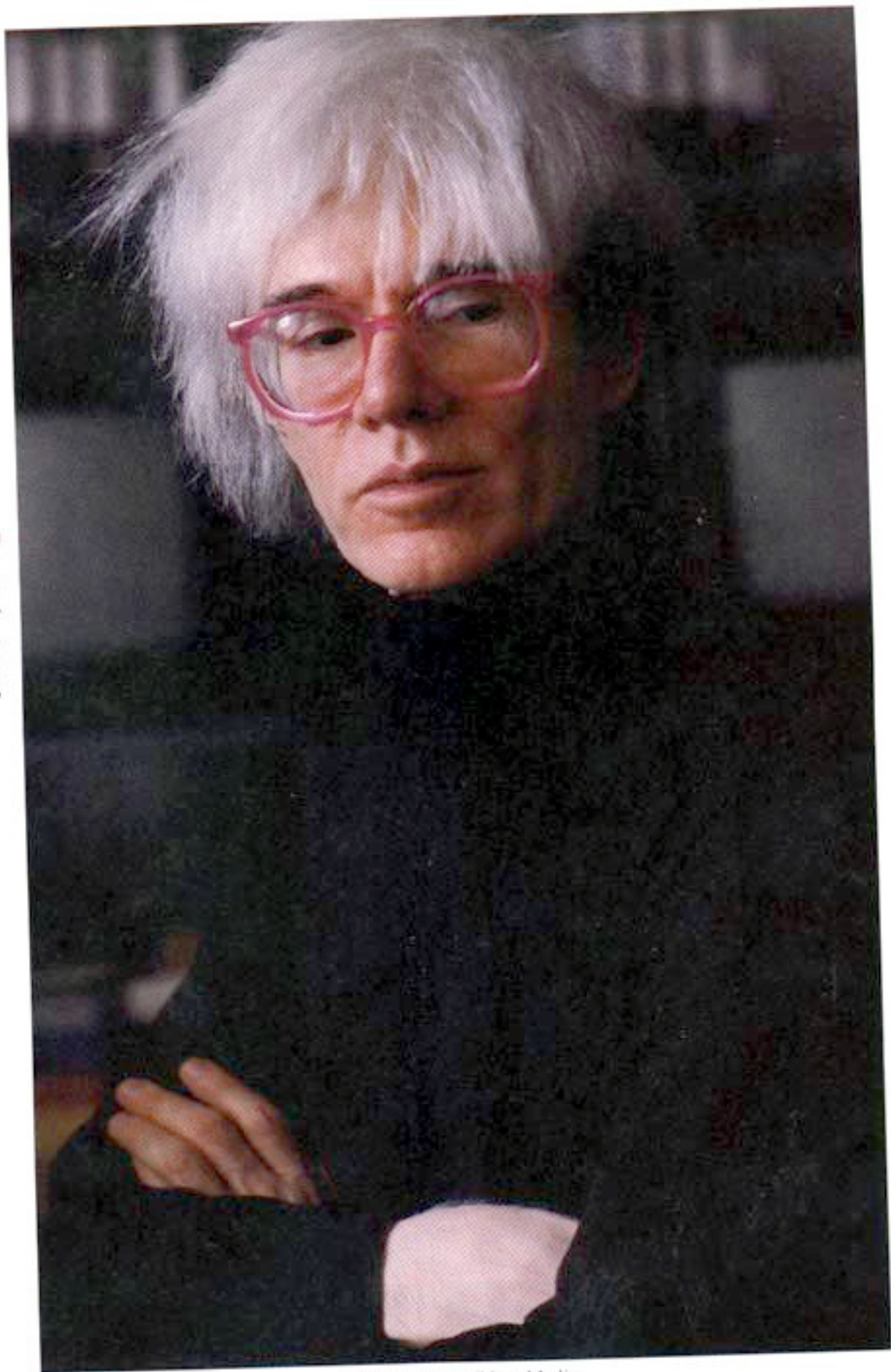


**The
Creative
Issue**

Also: Lisp to Logo, Business BBS, and Amiga Adventures



*"The thing that I
like most about
doing this kind of
art on the Amiga is
that it looks like my
work."*



Photography by Edward Judice

Andy Warhol: An Artist and His Amiga

*A conversation about art and the Amiga
with artist Andy Warhol*

By Guy Wright and Glenn Suokko

Warhol Studios. New York City. Into the front to shake hands all around. Managers, producers, art dealers, and, in the back of the crowd, Andy Warhol. Small, black jeans, sneakers, bright pink glasses, white hair. He shakes hands with a quiet "Hi," then disappears somewhere into the large building while the rest of us are taken up, two at a time, in a very small Otis elevator to a second or third floor dining room for lunch.

The cozy affair is filled with editors from Interview magazine, art critics, friends, managers, us (Glenn Suokko, AmigaWorld's Art Director, and myself), and others all talking, drinking wine, sitting at some unheard command and eating. Andy drifts in quietly, sits and eats at the far end of the table. Monosyllabic answers to questions asked by others at the table.

I ask an editor of Interview what questions I should ask Andy. "Is there anything he likes to talk about?"

"That's a hard one," he says. "Andy doesn't do interviews. I'm just glad that because he is the publisher [of Interview] I will never have to interview him. I don't know what I would ask. You should ask his manager."

Earlier, I asked Jeff, an engineer from Commodore who has been working with Andy for weeks on his new video for MTV, the same question. "I don't know," Jeff said. "He doesn't talk much. He doesn't talk at all. He doesn't do interviews, as far as I know. You guys are really lucky to get an interview with him."

Finally, I ask the Commodore exec who set up the interview in the first place. "Maybe I should ask the questions," he says. "Andy doesn't talk much, and I have no idea how it will go."

Our photographer arrives and Glenn goes up to the video studio to help set up lights. Lunch ends and I follow Andy upstairs to the studio.

"So, you don't do interviews?"

"No," Andy says abruptly. He disappears again. Great.

The video studio, where the MTV video was put together, has chairs, equipment racks, monitors, video editing decks, cameras, lights and two Amigas. Some paintings are brought in. Four by four foot Dolly Parton. Punching bags. Things. Vince Freeman, Producer for Andy Warhol's T.V., has everyone sit and we preview Andy Warhol's Fifteen Minutes (More or Less) video for MTV. The portions done on the Amiga are pointed out. Titles and special effects. Andy has drifted in to watch.

When it is over, most of the people in the room either leave or move or remain seated. A video camera is connected to a digitizer connected to one of the Amigas, and Andy sits before it. Lights are adjusted. The camera is turned on. The software is loaded.

Our photographer begins shooting almost non-stop. He uses a camera with an auto-winder so he can click-zhhh, click-zhhh, click-zhhh as fast as he can point and focus. He moves around the room quickly using up roll after roll of film.

No one is sure who is supposed to be there and who isn't. People wander, people sit, people talk. The engineer plugs in cables, types on the keyboard, moves and clicks the mouse, changes settings.

And Andy Warhol sits before an Amiga that is soon alive.

Images of what the video camera sees are fed into the Amiga and onto the screen. At first there are flickers of color and interference. The camera is pointed at nothing, and then (more for something to focus on than anything else), the engineer points the camera at the painting of Dolly Parton leaning against a rack filled with video tapes.



It doesn't really start anywhere. At some point tape recorders are turned on. At another point the software is working. Throughout there is the click-zhhh, click-zhhh, click-zhhh of the photographer's 35mm camera. Andy begins playing with the mouse, and the colors on the screen change with each move and click. He is intrigued with the changing colors and weird effects caused by the camera-light-software-mouse-people combination. ▶

While waiting for the interview to begin, the interview began. More as a conversation than an interview. Andy playing with the computer image, people coming in and going out. Many people asking questions, even Andy asking questions. The photographer shooting from every possible angle in the room. The engineer constantly adjusting equipment. People doing nothing but watching the screen as the colors change or the video camera is moved or the lights are moved or as Andy tries something else.

A color painting of Dolly Parton is, at first, shades of black, white and gray, but soon is illuminated, replacing the original colors with electronic Amiga colors.

An interview with Andy Warhol, who doesn't do interviews—an artist at the Amiga launch, an artist long before Amigas. Publisher of Interview magazine. Involved with video, MTV, rock, films, people and things like Amiga computers.

Glenn: When did you do this portrait of Dolly?

Andy: Last week.

Glenn: Hmm. Look at that color.

Andy: It would be great to just drop this color in. Oh yeah. So, do you want to ask me any questions?

GWS (Guy Wright): What do you want to talk about?

Andy: Oh, I don't know.



Glenn: Is this the greatest thing since sliced bread?

Andy: Oh yeah, it is.

Glenn: How do you see this work being displayed? How would you show something that you create on an Amiga to the general public?

Andy: Well, we could get a printout. I could just print this out if we had the printer.

GWS: Would you sell the prints or distribute the disk itself?

Andy: Well, this friend of mine, named Jean-Michel Basquiat, goes to the xerox machine and puts xerox all over his paintings. So, if we had a printer right here I could do it this way and just sign it as a print. But, I guess if printers ever get really big, like a twenty by thirty or thirty by forty, then it would really be great.

GWS: So you don't see any problem? Something you do on the computer can be recreated pixel for pixel, an exact duplicate?

Andy: Well, in prints they are supposed to be exact duplicates. So...

GWS: But there is a finite number, like print number fifty-six of one hundred.

Andy: Well, you can stop at whatever number you want. Etchings usually stop at a certain number.

[The motorized film advancer on the photographer's camera is furiously click-zhthing, click-zhthing, click-zhthing while people move around the room and Andy taps the buttons on the mouse.]

Glenn: Could you ever imagine monitors sunk into walls in museums or galleries?

Andy: Kids have been doing it already. The Paladium has two big square TV sets going all the time, with about 25 to 50 sets on each side. They haven't done any art yet, but it would be great to do that.

GWS: Like the Limelight with their bank of



TV sets along one wall.

Andy: Yeah, but actually Private Eyes is a video bar. [To Glenn] Have you been there?

Glenn: No.

Andy: It used to be right around here. So if you have a video you want to screen down there for a party, you can. It's not a dancing place. It's just a video bar.

GWS: Do you think that might be the new wave museums?

Andy: Well yeah, actually, when I worked on this at Lincoln Center [the Amiga launch], it was like a museum, because we had a couple thousand people and I was working with it on the stage. It was like a museum because you could show your work.

GWS: Instant museum in a finite time period.

Andy: Yes.

GWS: So it's not a static art?

Andy: Jack [Haeger, Art and Graphics Director at Commodore-Amiga], who was working with me before, uses it more like brushes and paint.

GWS: Do you like working with it?

Andy: I love it.

GWS: Are you going to buy one?

Andy: Well, we already have two, so we are going to buy the printer.

GWS: You are talking about the high-quality printer?

Andy: Well, they had the one at the launch, which was this big [measuring four square inches in the air with his hands]. It was really cute. Very pretty.

[People wander about the room. There is conversation in the background. The engineer adjusts cables. The photographer loads film, shoots, moves, shoots some more. The image on the Amiga vibrates with the changing room lighting and with the pass-



ing of people in front of the video camera. The engineer, finished with cables for the moment, goes to change the video camera angle.]

Glenn: I like the movement.

Andy: Well, it's not... ooooh [as the engineer moves the video camera, sending electric streaks of color across the Amiga's screen]. ... it is usually still. I guess the cycle is on. Oh, that stops it. Oh yeah, that is nicer.

[The image settles down to a crimson polarized wash of the day-glo Dolly Parton

painting, leaning crooked behind a bank of video production equipment.]

GSW: Do you see this as more video-oriented, as opposed to computer-oriented?

Andy: I think everything... anyone can use it.

GSW: Do you think there will be a rise in personal art?

Andy: That too, yeah. [Crimson changes to mauve to orange to fusia as Andy moves and clicks the mouse.] Well, I've been telling everybody about the machine, but they haven't been able to get one yet.

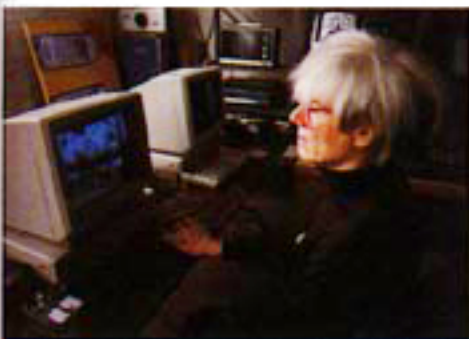
Glenn: Have any of your artist friends seen the stuff that you've done?

Andy: We had somebody come down the other day, and people have read in magazines about the stuff we did at the launch.

Glenn: How do your friends feel about computer art generally?

Andy: They all like it. They have been using the xerox, and they can't wait until they can use this, because there are so many people into xerox art. You do it and then take the stuff to the xerox store and do the prints there. Jean-Michel Basquiat uses xerox. So, if he could be printing out on his own machine, he would be using this.

Glenn: Jean Michel was the artist who worked with you on this? [An illustrated punching bag]



Andy: Yes.

GSW: Do you like the machine because it is so quick?

Andy: I think it's great. It's quick and everything.

GSW: What influence do you think this will have on mass art as opposed to high art?

Andy: Mass art is high art.

GSW: Do you think it will push the artists? Do you think that people will be inclined to use all the different components of the art, music, video, etc.?

Andy: That's the best part about it. I guess you can... An artist can really do the whole thing. Actually, he can make a film with everything on it, music and sound and art... everything.

Glenn: Have you been doing anything with the music capabilities?

Andy: Not yet. We were just trying to learn the art part of it first. [Another color change on the digitized video image of Andy's photographic painting of Dolly. Where there were reds are now blue-blacks, where there was flesh pink there is now yellow-green.] Oh, this is great.

GSW: Do you think the computer has a limiting effect?

Andy: No.

GSW: Do you think it is open ended?

Andy: Yeah. [Andy is distracted constantly by the changing colors on the Amiga screen. The Dolly Parton portrait is color animated with each mouse move and click.] Gee, if we had a printer now, I could just print these out and send them to Dolly Parton in all these different colors. It would save us a lot of trouble.

Glenn: Has she seen the portrait?

Andy: No, we were going to send it out. This would be great because I could do it in green and another color.

Exec: Like you did with the Deborah Harry thing?

Andy: Yeah.

[At the Amiga launch, Deborah Harry, singer for the group Blondie, posed before a video camera. A single black-and-white



frame was frozen and transferred to a paint program where Andy filled in colors, added lines, drew with the mouse and finished in ten minutes what would have taken weeks in a studio.]

GSW: How much time have you spent with the Amiga?

Andy: Just the few weeks that Jack [Haeger] was here. We are waiting to get the final software. And then we need Jack back again for a couple of weeks. Has Jack discovered any new techniques?

Exec: I'm sure he has, because the new pro-

grams have a lot of different capabilities.

Andy: What are they? What new things have come up in the last few months?

Exec: I haven't even seen them myself.

Everyone has been working on their separate piece of the puzzle. But the last time I spoke with Jack, he asked when he was coming back here. So I know that he is eager to come back.

[Another option of the paint program is activated and the colors cycle through the spectrum on their own with a light and color strobe effect.]

Andy: Oh, yeah. Oh, that's weird. Oh, look at that.

GSW: Is there anything that you don't like about the Amiga?

Andy: No, no, I love the machine. I'll move it over to my place, my own studio. That way I'll be able to do the colors. It'll be really great, and if we can get a printer, I'll do this portrait in four different colors and send them out to Dolly.

GSW: Then you see yourself using it as a major tool?

Andy: Oh yeah. It would save a lot of time. I wouldn't have had to do all these portraits all at once. I could have just picked out the colors I wanted and sent them out, and then picked the one I wanted.

Glenn: Do you think that it will have any



effect on the value of an 'Andy Warhol original'?

Andy: No, it would just be a sketch. Call it a sketch.

GSW: Do you ever see that as becoming an artwork in its own right?

Andy: Oh yeah. Well, actually, Steven Sprouse really did most of his artwork this way. He did his last print, I think, with the planets and stuff, in this way. Beautiful things, geeze!



Illustrations above and on following page were done by Andy Warhol

Glenn: Would you ever think of sending them out as finished pieces?

Andy: Well, we are doing that already. After I did that and Steven saw them, he showed me some of his things and they're just great.

GSW: The great thing is that you can play with all the color combinations, take a picture of the combination or make a printout and then decide which combination works best.

Andy: Well, maybe I could take the painting up there and I could do the color variations on it. There must be a printer we could get, even the small one.

Exec: Actually I think we have a larger printer.

Andy: How big is it?

Exec: Eight by eleven.

Andy: Oh really? Could we do that maybe this week?

Exec: Next week.

Andy: OK. If I brought this picture up, could I just do different colors of this?

Jeff: Sure.

Andy: [To Guy] And then you could use this in your article. You could show how I could change the picture. Do you know what day next week? Early next week?

Exec: They're around. It's just a matter of picking one up.

Andy: Oh. OK.

[More adjusting of the camera and painting of Dolly. The photographer is beginning to slow down, but his camera continues to click-zhhh, click-zhhh, click-zhhh.]

GSW: What are the things that you like the most about doing this kind of art on the Amiga?

Andy: Well, I like it because it looks like my work.

GSW: How do you feel about the fact that everyone's work will now look like your work?

Andy: But it doesn't. You just showed me other artists' work in the magazine [Amiga-World]. It looks like the work that I started doing. I still think that someone like a decorator could use it when he wants to show somebody how their apartment would look all in blue or all in white, or... they could just do it so easily. Change a chair or a color.

GSW: Would you ever consider using the Amiga for 'traditional' uses?

Andy: The kids from *Interview* magazine [Andy Warhol is the publisher of *Interview*, whose offices are downstairs] want to steal it already. We just haven't given it to them.

Glenn: Do you think that you might ever use any of the pictures generated on the Amiga in the magazine [Interview]?

Andy: Oh yeah. This would be a really good thing for our covers.

GSW: Do you ever play computer games?

Andy: I'm not fast enough.

GSW: There are some slow ones. Interactive fiction. Electronic novels.

Andy: Oh really? [To exec] Are the ad agencies getting the machine yet?

Exec: You got yours way ahead of schedule.

Andy: Oh great!

GSW: How do you feel about using the mouse instead of a paint brush?

Andy: I thought that I would have the pen [light pen] by now.

GSW: Do you find the mouse a little awkward?

Andy: Yeah, the mouse is hard. Why isn't there a pen around?

Exec: Kurta is working on one right now, and we thought that we would have it by now, but...

Andy: Would a pen work the same way? I mean, it could even be a square pen. You could put the ball down here [indicating the corner of the mouse], just holding it differently. If you had a ball at the tip, you could hold it differently.

GSW: A ball point mouse.

Jeff: The one we are working on doesn't even have a cable.

Andy: You mean just like a pencil?

Jeff: Yes.

Andy: Oh, how great. That is going to do much. You could trace over a picture and stuff like that?

Jeff: Yes.

GSW: With something like this [the mouse] do you miss getting your hands in the paint?

Andy: No. No. It's really great not to get your hands in paint. I don't know. They always say that plastic paint is bad for you. Is this bad for you?

GSW: Nowadays they say that it is the way you sit in the chair in front of the display.

Glenn: Could you do a self-portrait?

Andy: Oh sure.

[The video camera is moved to point at Andy, and his face appears on the Amiga display. With Andy on the monitor and Andy in front of the computer and Dolly the background, there is photographic temptation.]

Photographer: Could you lean forward? I want to get both you and Dolly in the same shot. [Andy leans.] That's excellent. That's good. OK, thanks.

Glenn: Did Dolly Parton come to you to do the portrait?

Andy: I did it when I went out to the Madonna wedding.

[Back to the self-portrait. The engineer adjusts colors, levels and gray scales until Andy is satisfied.]

Andy: There, that one [indicating a straight black-and-white video image of himself].

Jeff: Like that?

Andy: Uh huh. [Already working on coloring in the on-screen image of his face] God, isn't that funny?

GSW: If there was something that you could add to the Amiga, what would you add?

Andy: The only thing that I would add would be the pencil [light pen]. That's the only thing.

GSW: What about working on the screen itself, with a touch screen?

Andy: Well, that would be great. That would be good with the pencil, because you could add in the color and stuff like that, but with a sharp point, you could get the lines easier.

GSW: Have you ever done anything with computers before?

Andy: No, this is the first time.

GSW: Why haven't you used computers before?

Andy: Oh, I don't know. MIT called me for about ten years or so, but I just never went up... maybe it was Yale.

GSW: You just never thought it was interesting enough?

Andy: Oh no, I did, uh, it's just that, well, this one was just so much more advanced than the others. I guess they started all that there, all the kids from college who went to California. Weren't they the inventors?

GSW: Do you think that computers will play a larger and larger role in art?

Andy: Uh, yeah, I think that after graffiti art, they probably will. When the machine comes out fast enough. It will probably take over from the graffiti kids.

GSW: You like graffiti art?

Andy: Oh yeah, I do. I think it's really terrific.

[Andy becomes absorbed in the self-portrait. Adding colors, lines, filling in areas, changing things. The mouse is moved and

clicked and clicked, but his eyes never leave the screen. People continue to move around the room. Some leave, some enter, most just stare at the Amiga screen while the black-and-white Warhol changes from a digitized video frame displayed on an Amiga computer into a full color self-portrait, a Warhol-painting-Warhol original. The iterations of Andy Warhol painting on an Amiga an Andy Warhol painting of Andy Warhol sitting at an Amiga doing electronic painting become too confusing to follow. Vince Freeman, producer of Andy Warhol's T.V., enters and stares with the rest of us.]

Vince: You want some air conditioning in here?

Jeff: I turned it off, because of the fan.

Vince: How about opening the door?

Jeff: Fine, thanks.

[Squeak... door opening... crash, rumble-rumble-rumble, metal door rises.]

Vince: [Stepping outside onto the roof] I love these skylights.

Andy: [Rising for a moment to look outside.

The image of his face on the screen, partially colored, stares at an unseen monitor.]

They were supposed to be party tables.

Vince: Those skylights are being knocked down now.

Andy: Are they? [He steps outside.] Again?

Vince: People from the other buildings throw stuff on them, and since they put in the wrong weight of glass, they have a tendency to break.

Andy: I haven't seen the back in a long time.

Vince: OK. Everybody go outside and take a break for five minutes. Is that roll up still there? Andy? Andy?

[Andy returned and the self-portrait was finished. People wandered off. We had to leave. Other interviews. Other...]■

