The pictorial genre of the portrait doubly cherishes the cornerstone of bourgeois western culture. The uniqueness of the individual and his or her accomplishments is central in that culture. And in the portrait, originality comes in twice. The portrait is highly esteemed as a genre because, according to the standard view, in a successful portrait the viewer is not only confronted with the "original", "unique" subjectivity of the portrayer, but also of that of a portrayed. Linda Nochlin has expressed this abundance of originality tersely: in the portrait we watch "the meeting of two subjectivities".

Such a characterisation of the genre immediately foregrounds those aspects of the portrait that heavily depend on specific notions of the human subject and of representation. As for the represented object, this view implies that subjectivity can be equated with notions like the self or individuality. Somebody's subjectivity is defined in its uniqueness rather than in its social connections; it is someone's interior essence rather than a moment of short duration in a differential process. Somebody's continuity or discontinuity with others is denied in order to present the subject as personality. One may ask if this view does justice even to the traditional portrait.

As for the representation itself, the kind of notion we get from this view is equally specific. It implies that the portrait refers to a human being which is (was) present outside the portrait. A recent book on portraiture makes this notion of the portrait explicit on its first page:

"Fundamental to portraits as a distinct genre in the vast repertoire of artistic representation is the necessity of expressing this intended relationship between the portrait image and the human original."

The artistic portrait differs, however, from the photographic portrait as used in legal and medical institutions, by doing a bit more than just referring to somebody. It is more than documentation. The portrayer proves her/his artistic originality by consolidating the self of the portrayed. Although the portrait refers to an original self already present, this self needs its portrayal in order to secure its own being. The portrayer has enriched the interiority of the portrayed's self by...
This description of the portrait as exemplum of the (artistic) picture reveals the contradictory nature of mimetic representation. It shows how the traditional notion of the portrait depends on the rhetorical strategy of mimesis. According to Gadamer, in the portrait, more often in any other kind of picture, an "increase of being" comes out. This increase turns out to be the essential quality of the true appearance of the sitter. The portrait refers to the sitters who exist outside the work. Since the sitters exist outside the work, we may assume that also her/his essence exists outside the work.

This implies that the portrait brings with it two references. The first is the portrayed as body, as material form. The second is the essence of the sitter, her/his unique authenticity. Within the traditional notion of the portrait, it is a truism that the strength of a portrait is being judged in relation to this supposed essence, not in relation to the looks of a person. This explains the possibility of negative judgements on photographic portraits. Although a camera captures the appearance of a person maximally, the photographer has as many problems in capturing a sitters "essence" as a painter does. Camera work is not the traditional portrait's ideal, but its failure, because the essential quality of the sitter can only be caught by the artist, not by the camera.

But in Gadamer's text we don't read about an essential quality which has been captured. The essence of the sitter is the increase of being that seems to be produced by the portrayer in the portrait. "What comes into being in it is not already contained in what his acquaintances see in the sitter". The portrayer makes visible the inner essence of the sitter and this visualising act is creative and productive. It is more than a passive rendering of what was presumed to be already there, although interior and hence invisible. The portrayer gives his supposed interiority an outer form so that we viewers can see it. This outer form is then the signifier (expression) of the signified (the sitter's inner essence).

What to do with the surplus of the increase of being? It is clear that Gadamer does not use the term "increase of being" for the portrait's likeness with the sitter's material form. He indicates the second referent of the portrait: the sitter's essential quality. Gadamer makes it clear that what comes into being in it is the same as the referent of the painting. He presumes a unity between increase in being and the essential quality of the sitter or, semiotically speaking, between signifier and signified. By presuming unity, he denies that the increase of being is a surplus. By doing that, Gadamer exemplifies the semiotic economy of mimetic representation. This economy involves a straightforward relationship of identity between signifier and signified. This identity between signifier and signified is not inevitable.
The signifier can be viewed as representing the signified. Their unity is then the sign. The possibility of unity is based on the assumed essential homogeneity of the signified. The sign in its unity must represent the singularity of the signified. It is thus that authenticity is interpolated into the relationship between the elements of the sign. Even though the signifier and the signified can never be the same, there is, none the less, a boundary which, transcended, would render the relationship inauthentic.

Most surprisingly, Benjamin attributes authenticity neither to the signifier nor to the signified, but to the special relationship between the two. In the case of the portrait this semiotic economy implies that the qualifications "authenticity", "uniqueness", or "originality" do not belong to the portrayed subject or to the portrait or painter, but to the mode of representation which makes us believe that signifier and signified form a unity. In connection with the issue of authority, this entails a socially embedded conception: the bourgeois self depends on a specific mode of representation for its authenticity.

Now my earlier remark becomes clearer, because more specific, that the portrait embodies a dual project: it gives authority to the portrayed as well as to mimetic representation. The illusion of the signifier not to the signified, but to the special relationship between signified and signifier form a unity. In connection with the issue of authority, this a specific mode of representation for its authenticity. The mode of representation which makes us believe that signifier and signified form a unity. As soon as this unity is challenged, the uniqueness of the portrayed subject presupposes, however, belief in the split between signified and signifier. At the moment that artists stop showing a loss of self instead of its consolidation; shaping the subject as the portrayed dealers, they try to conform to a disappearance of the notion of individuality. Since the multiperformance of the subject is increasingly exaggerated, they try to convey by representing their subjects, to be distinguished from each other, to depict them as individuals, is not the same as bestowing authority on them. Andy Warhol's portraits have played a major role in posing questions concerning the social and public dimension of subjectivity. In his work, the subject has acquired explicit mythical and incredible proportions. This ironic mythification leads to a disappearance of all subjectivity on both sides of the portrait: that of the portrayed and the portrayed. What Warhol's individuality, his painterly performance, is systematically absent. His photographic, mechanically produced portraits leave no room for the illusion of the unique self of the portrayed. What Warhol's portraits are also bereft of their interiority. They are exhibited as public substitutes for subjectivity. We viewers see not surface and virtual space, between bodily volume and painterly texture, as all physiognomic features merge instantly with their resemblance.

In these Cubist paintings Picasso has not only explored a new representation of subjectivity, but at the same time articulated a new concept of mimetic representation. What kind of subjects emerge from these portraits, and how?

Picasso no longer makes use of a plastic system of signs which refer iconically to subjects, fictional or not. His representational mode is no longer mimetic. He uses a small number of forms which signify in relation to each other, differentially. This new mode of representation is based on an economy in which no signifier forms a fixed unity with singularity in detail in his article "Kahnweiler's Lesson". He writes: "A form can sometimes be seen as 'nose' and sometimes as 'mouth', as 'guitar'...". The signs Picasso uses in these portraits are entirely virtual, or nonsubstantial and can no longer be assumed to relate mimitically to the object of representation; parts of the sitters, faces, are shaped mainly as a result of a differential process between the signifiers used.

But does this signifying model based on structural difference also give rise to a new conception of subjectivity? Because of any earlier claim about the intertwining of these two kinds of conceptions, one should expect so. There are remnants of the mimetic model insofar as the portrayed dealers "look" different. They can be distinguished from each other. But as we have seen, a "good" portrait claims more than physical recognizability and it would be ludicrous to claim that Kahnweiler is depicted there in his full presence or essence. Here, the process of constructing the illusion of subjectivity with forms which are arbitrary and exchangeable has become predominant. To differentiate subjects from each other, to depict them as individuals, is not the same as bestowing authority on them. When the notion of individuality is more and more contested, it is safeguarded as a spectacle, for sight. It is hard to deny "naturalness" to the forms of the grotesque or the life of freaks.

SUBJECTED SUBJECTS

In an article on the ends of portraiture, Buchloh sees the portraits Picasso made in 1910 of his dealers, Kahnweiler, Vollard and Uhde, as pronouncements of the death of the genre:

These antiportraits fuse the sitter's subjectivity in a continuous network of phenomenological interdependence between pictorial
a unique self, but a subject in the image of the star, totally modelled on this public fantasy of "stardom".

The avant-garde opposition to the portrait by Pop artists like Warhol stems from an uncanny insight into the formative dimension of the mass-media. In the 1980s, feminism gave a new and more fundamental dimension to the conviction that identity is not authentic but socially constructed. It is not the dimension of the mass-media which is foregrounded in its effect of making, or rather emptying out, the subject, but rather representation in the most general way. The "Untitled Film Stills" by Cindy Sherman address this issue most disturbingly. These famous black and white photographs show female characters (always Sherman herself) in situations which remind us of Hollywood films of Sherman herself in the 1950s. The "Untitled Film Stills" give the illusion that they are based on original shots from existing films and that Sherman has re-enacted the such an original still. Each effort to point out the original film that the photographs are based on is, however, frustrated. There is no "original" of a Sherman "Untitled Film Stills". As Krauss writes:

Not in the 'actual film' nor in a publicity shot or 'ad', nor in any other published 'picture'. The condition of Sherman's work in the Film Stills - and part of their point, we would say, is the simulacrum nature of what they contain, the condition of being a copy without an original.

It is not by accident that Sherman "made her point" within the genre of the (self-) portrait, because it is exactly the relation between subjectivity and representation which is scrutinised in her work. The standard relation between subject and representation is now reversed. We do not see a transparent representation of a "full" subjectivity, instead we see a photograph of a subject which is constructed in the image we see a photograph of a subject which is constructed in the image of the portrait, or rather the standard view of representation. The traditional portrait, or rather the view of the traditional portrait, is turned inside out.

In all her "Untitled Film Stills" we are impelled to recognise a visual style and a type of femininity. The images suggest that there is a particular kind of femininity in the woman, whereas in fact the femininity is in the image itself, it is the image. This conclusion could give the impression that there is little difference between the impression in Pop-art portraiture and in Sherman's the notion of the subject in a portrait. For both oeuvres short-circuit the idea that the portrait provides a representation of a subject which is authentic and original. There is, however, a major difference between the Pop art portraits of the 1960s and the feminist photographs of Sherman of the late 1970s. This difference gives a new edge to the deconstruction of the portrait by twentieth-century artists. In the words of Rosalind Krauss:

"Indeed, almost two decades of work on the place of woman within representation has put this shift into effect, so that a whole domain of discourse no longer conceives of stereotype as a kind of mass-media mistake, a set of cheap costumes women might put on or cast aside. Rather stereotype - itself baptised now as "masquerade" and here understood as a psychoanalytic term - is thought of as the phenomenon to which all women are submitted both inside and outside representation, so that as far as femininity goes, there is nothing but costume."

This implies that representations in the restricted sense - films, advertisements, novels, paintings - are part of a far more absolute set of mechanisms; of representation in the broader sense, called the symbolic order in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Subjectivities are shaped, are constructed by this symbolic order.

The portrait receives a new significance in the light of this feminist, psychoanalytically informed conception of subjectivity. In Sherman's case, the portrait is not used as a critique of the mass-media, but as the framework which explores and exposes modes of femininity. This had to be done within the genre of the portrait exactly because, according to the standard view of the traditional portrait, that was the place were we could watch femininity as an essential quality, as beauty, that is. If the portrait has been one of the main frameworks in which the notion of "real" femininity had been advocated, it is of course the most relevant space for a deconstruction of that notion.

SUBJECTING POWERS OF REPRESENTATION

Although I have assumed an intertwining in the portrait between the conception of subjectivity and that of representation, I have so far focused on twentieth-century portraiture whose main point it is to propose new notions of the subject. Not all twentieth-century artists who have challenged portraiture began by reflecting on subjectivity. Some of them gave rise to new conceptions of subjectivity as a result of their challenging reflections on the effects and powers of representation, especially of the representation of human subjects. Because of the intertwining of the two conceptions, the difference is often hard to discern. Challenging the notion of subjectivity has immediate consequences for the notion of representation; and the other way round. But it is not so long after that I will now focus on artists who have changed portraiture by their reflections on representation.

In his Camera Lucida, the French critic and semiotician Roland Barthes has written about the nature of the relation between portrait and portrayed. In his view, the image has a strong hold over the subject through the ability to represent the body of the subject as whole, an ability that the subject itself lacks. For the subject has only transient..."
bodily experiences and partial views of its own body. To transform these fragmented experiences and views into a whole, the subject needs an image of itself.

Barthes, however, does not see the dependence on the unity-bestowing relation with the image as desirable, but as mortifying. “I, you, and the image of you”[7]. Barthes’ remark about the effect of photographic portraiture on the subject is quoted here to emphasize the most general sense of the term “objectification of the subject”[8]. But it is also about the absence of an image, according to Barthes, and the becoming of an image, as a discursive effect of representation. In his view on the portrait, Barthes needs the portrait that the subject is not confronted with according to Barthes, in the portrait the subject is not confronted with. The dependence on an image, he says, is always an illusion, but by becoming, it is alienated from itself because assimilated into the image.[9]

Barthes’ view on the portrait is highly ambivalent. One depends on the illusion of wholeness, but at the same time, one has to pay for that by a loss of self. One’s image is always cast one has to pay for that by a loss of self. One’s image is always cast in terms of the already-represented. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. And resists it, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict. Barthes needs the portrait in this sense, which makes the portrait into a space conflict.
accuses mimetic representation, by foregrounding its mortifying effects on the subject\textsuperscript{23}.

**Portraits Referring Differently**

The portraits of Sherman and Warhol undermine the idea that the portrait is able to refer to somebody outside the portrait. Portraits are caught up in the realm of representation. They refer to mass-produced stereotypes or simulacra which function as screens that block a transparent view of reality. Does this mean that reference is a passe notion in contemporary portraiture?

I don’t think so. Instead, referentiality has become an object of intense scrutiny. The work of the French Jewish artist Christian Boltanski explores the concept of reference in a fundamental way. Boltanski foregrounds the idea that these portraits are dead and that within the genre of the portrait. He is very well-known for his use of Jewish imagery. In his **The Mickey Mouse Club** (1974), for instance, he presents rephotographed pictures of children who had passed away. In the children’s magazine The Mickey Mouse Club, the children had sent in a picture which represented them best. Looking at these pictures seventeen years after they were collected, Boltanski is confronted with the incapacity of these images to refer. They don’t correspond any more with reality, and all these children’s faces have disappeared. These portraits don’t signify “presence”, but exactly the opposite: absence. If there were “interiority” or “essence” in a portrait, these photographs should still enable Boltanski to get in touch with the represented children. But they don’t. They only evoke absence.

In some of his later works he intensifies this effect by enlarging the photos so much that most details disappear. The eyes, noses and mouths become dark holes, the faces white sheets. These blow-ups remind us of the Holocaust, which Boltanski also picks up from the history of art to make his own point with it. In William Kentridge’s **Getrude and Ada**, a video piece at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, a tiny silhouette is seen on a wall on the left of the filmed performance of the Last Judgement also suggests a formal link between the two images. Kentridge’s “presence” is a mimic painting. It can be read as a homage to the Holocaust, to the women, because later Hitler adolescents admitted that he had “depicted” the audience by exhibiting screen images which had been borrowed from personal annuities. But this only proves the semantic status of his work. This is why I felt the need to pay homage to these “dead”, who in this image, all look more or less the same, like cadavers\textsuperscript{24}.

The photographs don’t help him to bring back the memories of his classmates. He calls his classmates “cadavers”, because the portraits of them are dead. The portraits are dead because they don’t provide presence or reference. He only remembers what the pictures offers in its flat materiality as a signifier: faces.

The dead portraits are in tension with another element of his installations. The installations are always framed as memorials, as monuments or as shrines. The photographs are often lit by naked bulbs as if to represent candles, to emphasize their status as memorial or shrine. These framings make the intention of the installation explicit. The portraits are to be remembered or to keep in touch with the subjects portrayed. The photographs produce, however, an effect which is in conflict with this intention. They are not able to make the portrayed subject present. They evoke absence. That is why the portraits are not so much memorials of a dead person, but of a dead pictorial genre. The portrait is not in its failure to fulfill its traditional promises.

But Boltanski has made other kinds of works which are closer to fulfilling the standard claims of portraiture. In 1973 and 1974 he made several installations, generically called “Inventories”, which consisted of the belongings of an arbitrary person. In his **Inventories of Objects that belonged to a Woman of New York**, he presented the furniture of a woman who had just died. The function of these belongings was to witness the existence of the woman who had passed away. Semiotically speaking, these “Inventories” are fundamentally different from the installations with photographs. While the photographs refer iconically (or rather, fail to do so), the inventories refer indexically. The pieces of furniture represent the woman, not by means of similarity or likeness, but by contiguity. The woman and her belongings have apparently been represented in the portrait, as well as absence of “presence” in the image. About his **Monuments** (1986), for which he used a photograph of himself and of seventeen classmates, he says the following:

> Of all these children, among whom I found myself, one of whom was probably the girl I loved, I don’t remember any of their names. I don’t remember anything more than the faces on the photograph. It could be said that they disappeared from my memory, that this period of time was dead. Because now these children must be adults, about whom I know nothing. This is why I felt the need to pay homage to these “dead”, who in this image, all look more or less the same, like cadavers.

The point here is the shift from icon to index\textsuperscript{25}. The difference between the iconical and the indexical works is a matter of pretension. The photographic portraits claim, by convention, to refer to somebody and to make that person present. They fail, as I have argued, in both

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\textsuperscript{23} Christian Boltanski by Dorothea Davies, quoted in Gumpert, Christian Boltanski.

\textsuperscript{24} Or rather, these belongings poaching to, and thus represent the idea of having been something to the woman, because later Hitler adolescents admitted that he had “depicted” the audience by exhibiting screen images which had been borrowed from personal annuities.

\textsuperscript{25} For a seminal discussion of the important role of the Index in contemporary art see R. Krauss, Notes on the Index,Art and Interpretation, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1985, pp. 1-10.

\textsuperscript{26} For a seminal discussion of the important role of the Index in contemporary art see R. Krauss, Notes on the Index, Art and Interpretation, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1985, pp. 1-10.
respects. The indexical works don’t claim presence; they show somebody’s belongings, not the person her/himself. And strangely enough, they are successful as acts of referring to the person to whom the objects belonged. This success is due to the fact that one of the traditional components of the portrait has been exchanged for another semiotic principle. Simplicity has gone, constancy is proposed as the new mode of portraiture. When we stay with the standard definition of the portrait, Boltanski’s indexical works fit much better in the genre of the portrait than his photographic portraits.

Although referentiality is more successfully pursued in the indexical installations, the problem of presence in these works is again foregrounded as a failure. In The Clothes of François C., for instance, we see black-and-white, tin-framed photographs of children’s clothing. The photographs or these clothes immediately raise the question of the identity and the whereabouts of their owner. This leads again to the “Holocaust-effect”. The clothes refer to the storage places in the death and concentration camps where all the belongings of the internees were sorted (thus depriving them of individual ownership), and stored. After the war, some of these storage places were found, and became symbols, or better indexical traces, of the millions who were put to death in the camps.

Marlene Dumas, a Dutch artist of South African origin, also addresses the problem of reference in her oeuvre, which mainly consists of groups or individual portraits. This artist is even more explicitly concerned with the problems of reference. She has said about her work: “I want to be a referential artist. To refer is only possible to something which has already been named. (But names are not always given by you)”[20]. Like artists such as Warhol and Sherman, Dumas is aware of the screen of images and representation, which makes reference impossible, but she does not accept the situation. Instead of foregrounding the screen and the impossibility of plain reference, she fights, while referring, against the conventional “names” which were not given by her. How does she do this?

The portraits and group portraits of 1985-87 show faces that often look like masks. The faces are usually very light. They look like sheets or screens which are emptied out; black pupils, surrounded by white, attract the attention in these bleached faces. The eyes are very ambiguous, in an uneasy way. It is not clear if, in their round darkness, they should be read as remnants of subjectivity - as the eyes peeping through holes in the artificial mask - or whether they are nothing other than stereotypical signs in a mask, indicating eyes. The mask, as well as the caricature, has had an important function in dismantling the traditional portrait in twentieth century art. Buchloh describes this role of the mask and the caricature as follows:

[...] both caricature and mask conceive of a person’s physiognomy as fixed rather than a fluid field; in singling out particular traits, they reduce the infinity of differential facial expressions to a metonymic set. Thus, the futility of mask and caricature deny outright the promise of fullness and the traditional aspirations toward an organic bourgeois subject[21].

The mask represents essential features of subjectivity as fixed, mechanical or grotesque. Although this is relevant for an understanding of Dumas’s work, her mask-like portraits evoke at the same time a very different quality. The faces in her work evoke emptiness and installations, those portraits give rise to a “Holocaust-effect”. In her group portraits it seems that the group as such is responsible for this. In The Teacher (1987) she portrays a class of schoolchildren in uniform. Uniform is usual in South Africa, but this portrayal emphasizes how apartheid culture fixed identities on the basis of the most superficial exteriority. As a consequence, the children’s faces have the same empty, uniform expression as their clothes. In The Teacher we see that the uniform expression of the students is that of their teacher. This sameness is presented as death or absence. The question arises, then, whether it is the situation of the group as such, or the portrayal of a group, which causes this putting to death of subjectivity, this Holocaust-effect? One cannot help remembering there that apartheid was quite literally the representation or “portrayal” of groups. But Dumas’s work goes beyond such a political statement alone. She explores the intricate relationship between the political situation of apartheid and the representational consequences of mimetic portrayal, looking for essences.

For Dumas’s later portraits suggest by their difference that these earlier works are part of an overall project to explore and challenge the systematic depletion of the conventional characteristics of the traditional portrait as a politically invested genre. In the later works she continues to pursue the genre conventions, but takes a different approach. She begins to experiment with format. While portraits are usually vertical (reflecting the human subject in its most respected posture, standing), an extreme horizontal format is also introduced. In such images the figures are stretched out in all their horizontality. It is as if they are pulled down, made powerless, by the format of the portrait and the authority of the portrayed person. This becomes provocatively clear when Dumas paints a male nude in this horizontal position in The Particularity of Nakedness (1987). He considered it a failure, because it had “too many horizontals” [sic]. A successful painting needs verticals, he seemed to imply, without

[22] Dumas, Maas, Interpreted, p. 43.
realising that Dumas had purposefully represented masculinity in this painting in such an un-erect way.

Dumas' explorations of the relation between format and authority are shaped by contrasts. While representing masculinity horizontally, she depicts babies vertically in four vertical paintings: The First People (I-IV) (1991). When depicted horizontally, we would see babies in these poses in all their vulnerability and powerlessness (see Warhol's Child). But, erected, these little creatures suddenly become monsters with grabbing claws. By enlarging this authority-effect of the vertical format, Dumas deconstructs this quality of the traditional portrait. She undoes the increase of being, namely the bestowing of authority on the portrayed, by giving it grotesque proportions and by attributing it to inappropriate exemplars.

In her work Black Drawings (1991–2), and the portraits she made for the mental institution Het Hooghuys, in Etten-Leur (1991), Dumas explored portrayal in yet another way. This time she made no individual portrait or group portrait, but a group of portraits. Black Drawings consist of 112 portraits of black people; the work made for Het Hooghuys consists of 35 paintings, with one panel containing a poem by the Dutch poet Jan Arends. Most of the paintings are portraits of the people who are living in the mental institution, some are of animals.

These two groups of portraits are radically different from the earlier group portraits. They don't produce a Holocaust-effect. Nor do they work as a collection of original subjectivities. Instead of promoting black subjects or mentally ill subjects to the status of bourgeois subjectivity, she constructs a conception of subjectivity based on variety and diversity, but not on unique individuality. The portrayed models are not bestowed with subjectivity in terms of original presence, but in relation to each other. They are, because they are all different. That is why they all deserve their own panel within their collective portrayal.

The kinds of images I have discussed all suggest that the portrait has not at all become a dead genre in twentieth-century art, as some critics have claimed recently. Conceptions of subjectivity and identity have been challenged and mimetic conceptions of representation have been undermined in all kinds of ways. This has led to the implausibility of the intertwining of bourgeois subjectivity with mimetic representation, but not to the death of the genre as such. Although genres are of course contaminated by their histories, it is not necessary to define a genre by its history. Artists like Warhol, Sherman and Dumas show how a genre can be liberated from its history so that it can become an arena for new significations. The project of "portraying somebody in her/his individual originality or quality or essence" has come to an end. But portraiture as genre has become the form of new conceptions of subjectivity and new notions of representation.