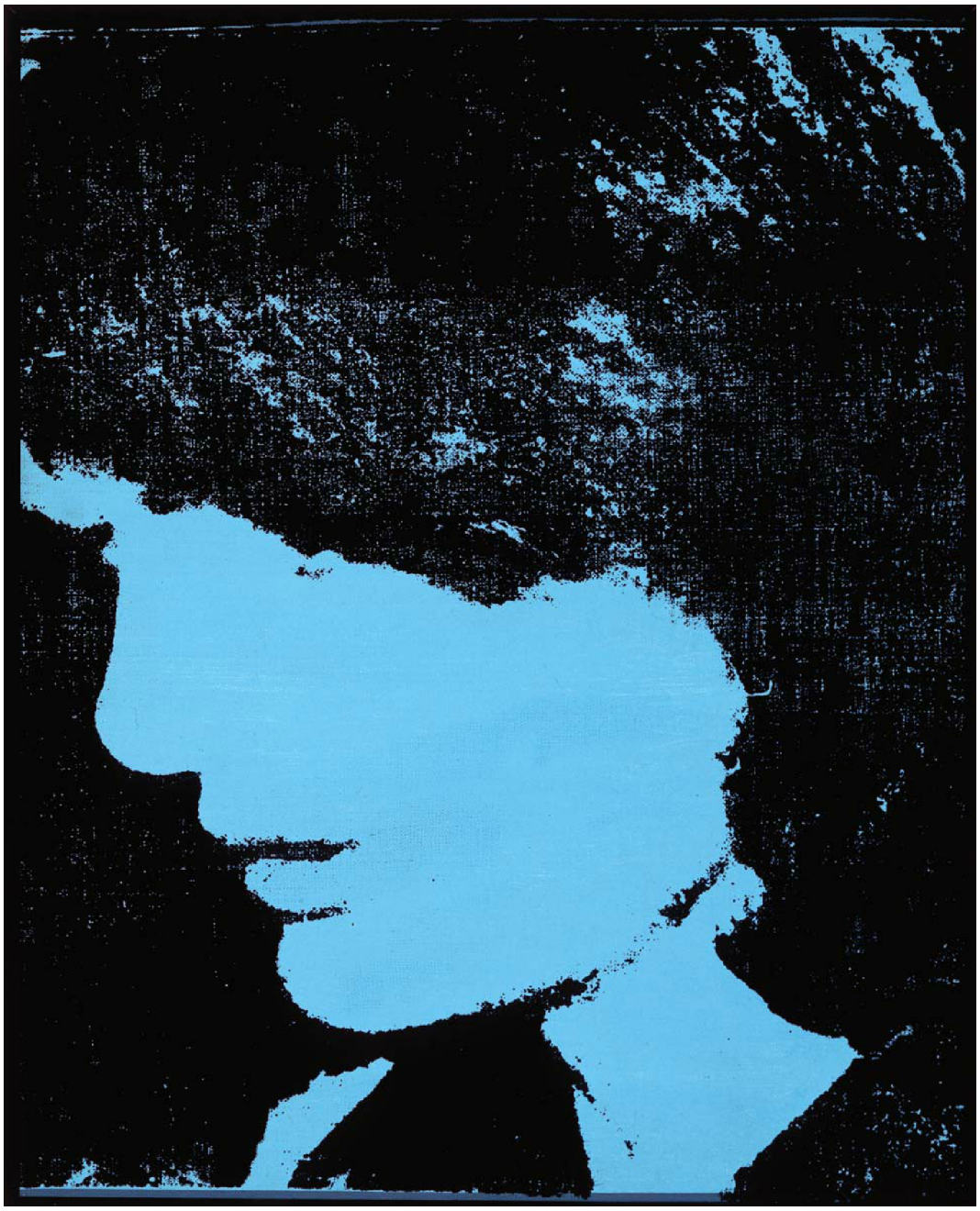


70: Andy Warhol *Jackie* (1964)

Marjorie B. Searl

"Where were you when Kennedy was shot?"

Lee Harvey Oswald's was, truly, the shot heard round the world.[1] Quite possibly, the news of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's assassination was known and felt by more people around the world than any event in recorded history: "In what amounted to a poignant demonstration of the newly emerging concept of the Earth as a global village, spontaneous gatherings of mourners assembled in public plazas throughout the world, east and west, with lit candles, solemn faces, and photographs of the slain president framed in black bunting."[2]

In part because Kennedy was really the first "television president," his life opened up before us on a regular basis. No doubt the first televised presidential debates won the election for him, and his televised inauguration was made memorable by these unforgettable lines: "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." His wife and children were regulars on our TV screen, as if they were our royal family; when he died, we watched his funeral—and family—as if they were our own.

Andy Warhol,
1928–1987
Jackie, 1964
Ink on canvas, 23⅞ x 23¼ in.
Marion Stratton Gould Fund,
65.7

Because the assassination was captured on film by dressmaker Abraham Zapruder, who was recording for himself and his family the moment when the president's open-air limousine drove by on that sunny November day in Dallas, those images have also been the most studied bits of photography to date. Many still living can recall, from seeing them on television or published in *Life Magazine*, the hundreds of images that came after the assassination itself: Mrs. Kennedy, still in her bloodied pink Chanel suit, standing by Lyndon Johnson while he was sworn in as president on Air Force One; the stoic, veiled Mrs. Kennedy with her children, Caroline and John, as the casket proceeds past them and John John salutes; the black riderless horse.

The pop artist Andy Warhol heard the news at the same time as everyone else.[3] He said:

> *When President Kennedy was shot that fall, I heard the news over the radio when I was alone painting in my studio. I don't think I missed a stroke. I wanted to know what was going on out there, but that was the extent of my reaction....I'd been thrilled having Kennedy as president; he was handsome, young, smart—but it didn't bother me that much that he was dead. What bothered me was the way the television and radio were programming everybody to feel so sad....John Quinn, the playwright...was moaning over and over, "But Jackie was the most glamorous First Lady we'll ever get."*[4]

Not long after the assassination, Warhol recognized that the images of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, or Jackie, as she is now known for all time, had become a commodity much like his ubiquitous Campbell Soup can. In his book *Dangerous Knowledge: The JFK Assassination in Art and Film*, Art Simon writes: "Indeed, the assassination as a consumer good, mass produced and sold on newsstands not far from the soup cans in grocery stores, is one of the inevitable messages of the Jackie portraits."[5] Her image had been repeated so many times that it was fairly imprinted in the minds of all Americans, if not all of humanity with access to television and print media. Warhol's relentless repetition of her image positioned Jackie as another American icon, the co-star of "the most powerful man in the Western world," ironically as visually memorable as Marilyn Monroe, who was romantically linked with JFK.[6]

The Memorial Art Gallery's painting, *Jackie*, is one of the many images that Warhol and his studio created in 1964. It is derived from a detail of a photograph by Cecil Stoughton, a captain in the army signal corps, taken on Air Force One when Lyndon Johnson was taking the oath of office and Jackie, still in her stained clothing, looked on.[7] Lady Bird Johnson described it this way:

> *On the plane, all the shades were lowered. We heard that we were going to wait for Mrs. Kennedy and the coffin....It was decided that Lyndon should be sworn in here as quickly as possible, because of national and world implications, and because we did not know how widespread this was as to intended victims....Mrs. Kennedy had arrived by this time, as had the coffin. There, in the very narrow confines of the plane—with Jackie standing by Lyndon, her hair falling in her face but very composed, with me beside him, Judge Hughes in front of him, and a cluster of Secret Service people, staff, and Congressmen we had known for a long time around him—Lyndon took the oath of office.*[8]

Cecil B. Stoughton, *Lyndon Baines Johnson Taking the Oath of Office on Air Force One Following the Assassination of John F. Kennedy, Dallas, Texas, November 22, 1963* Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration/ Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum

Judge Sarah T. Hughes is administering the oath to President Johnson, using the Bible that President Kennedy routinely took with him on trips.

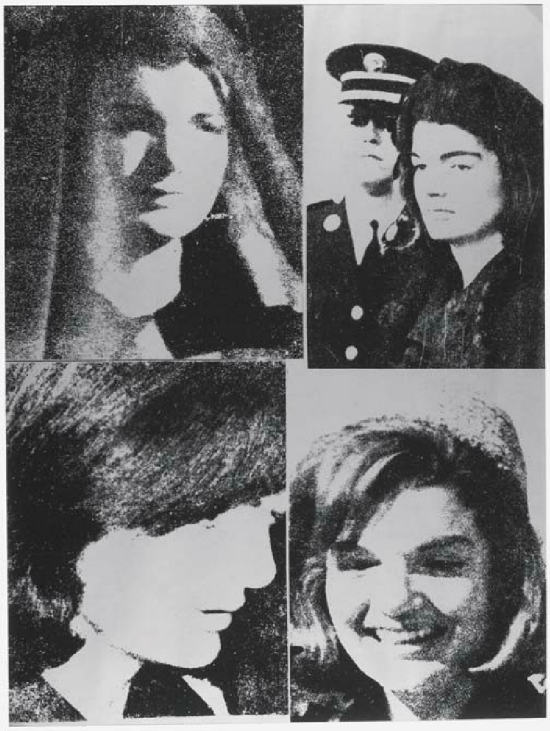
According to David Lubin, Jackie had not wanted to be in the photograph, but President Johnson insisted that she be there lest "the ceremony, without her presence, would lack legitimacy in the eyes of the public." Stoughton "wedged himself against the bulkhead as far forward as possible, and a phalanx of witnesses squeezed into every available spot in the cramped, overheated sixteen-foot-square stateroom of Air Force One (which sat on the runway sealed tight and without air conditioning) while crew and passengers waited for Mrs. Kennedy to appear."[9] Again, according to Lubin, "Jacqueline Kennedy grasped the importance of formality, especially in the midst of crisis, and that is why she consented to stand beside Lyndon Johnson as he raised his hand in oath. She lent a dignity to the occasion that could not have obtained without her."[10]

Warhol used a commercial silkscreening technique to produce this image. In his words,

> *In August '62 I started doing silkscreens. The rubber-stamp method I'd been using to repeat images suddenly seemed too homemade; I wanted something stronger that gave more of an assembly line effect. With silkscreening you pick a photograph, blow it up, transfer it in glue onto silk, and then roll ink across it so the ink goes through the silk but not through the glue. That way you get the same image, slightly different each time. It was all so simple quick and chancy. I was thrilled with it.*[11]

Appropriately, Warhol used a mass-production technology for his work, whose subjects are statements about mass production and market saturation. Warhol's "Factory" at 231 E. Forty-seventh Street housed an artistic production line where Warhol and his assistants produced the work by day and films were shot by night. For his *Jackie* series, Warhol used a handful of images that he configured in multiple ways—singly, as a pair, and up to sixteen and more, in shades mainly of blue and black.[12]

Jackie Kennedy was born in 1929 and died in 1994. Her life was tumultuous, thrilling, and tragic, and Warhol's gift was to understand her potential as the heroine of a powerful visual narrative. Through his images of her, we relive the events of November 22, 1963. We see the beautiful wife stepping off the plane, the smiling Jackie in the motorcade, the stunned Jackie of the MAG painting, the veiled Jackie looking beatific, all taken from photojournalistic sources. The tightness of the shots, the way in which the contrast of lights and darks are heightened and the resulting loss of detail control the way in which we understand the images. Nonetheless, Warhol's Jackie haunts us like a grieving Madonna, or a desolate Guinevere, the Queen of a Camelot that she began to construct in the weeks following the "King's" death.[13]



Andy Warhol,
1928–1987
Jacqueline Kennedy III, 1966
Serigraph, 40 x 30 in.
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel
G. Schuman, 76.132

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