

***It is what it is* – the Warhol effect**

A newspaper photograph of a plane crash in 1962 inspired American artist Andy Warhol to produce a silkscreen series based on horrific car accidents. In his silkscreens – some of which are coloured, some monochromatic – he seems to examine the aesthetics of death and disaster together with our perverse appetite for sensational horror.

Jeremy Deller cites Warhol as a major influence on his work, and we may interpret Deller's *It is what it is* – an imploded car and spectacle of carnage – to Warhol's Death and Disaster series. Among other things, both stimulate discussion about senseless tragedy.



Andy Warhol, "Green Disaster #2 (Green Disaster Ten Times)", 1963

In 1963, Warhol consciously disengaged from the process of traditional artistic creation: "I think somebody should be able to do all my paintings for me," he told art critic G.R. Swenson. Deller is similarly detached from the personal creation process.

Warhol and Deller's oeuvre could both be described as created in response to their respective times. Warhol elevated the everyday, to the status of 'high' art: Deller's *It is what it is*, isn't 'low' art, it's real life as art.

There's a certain 'to-be-looked-at-ness' about Deller's blown-up car,

and it turns out there is a science behind rubbernecking. Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, together Austrian Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, believed that we like to witness repulsive things because it satisfies our destructive tendencies without causing harm. We all have a dark 'shadow' according to Jung, which represents the dark and repressed side to our nature. We don't want to look; we feel guilty for looking; we reprimand others for looking; and yet, we look anyway!

Further reading/links

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wogBIFKs7N4>
- The psychology of looking at disaster is explained by C.A. Jung: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/evil-deeds/201204/essential-secrets-psychotherapy-what-is-the-shadow>