

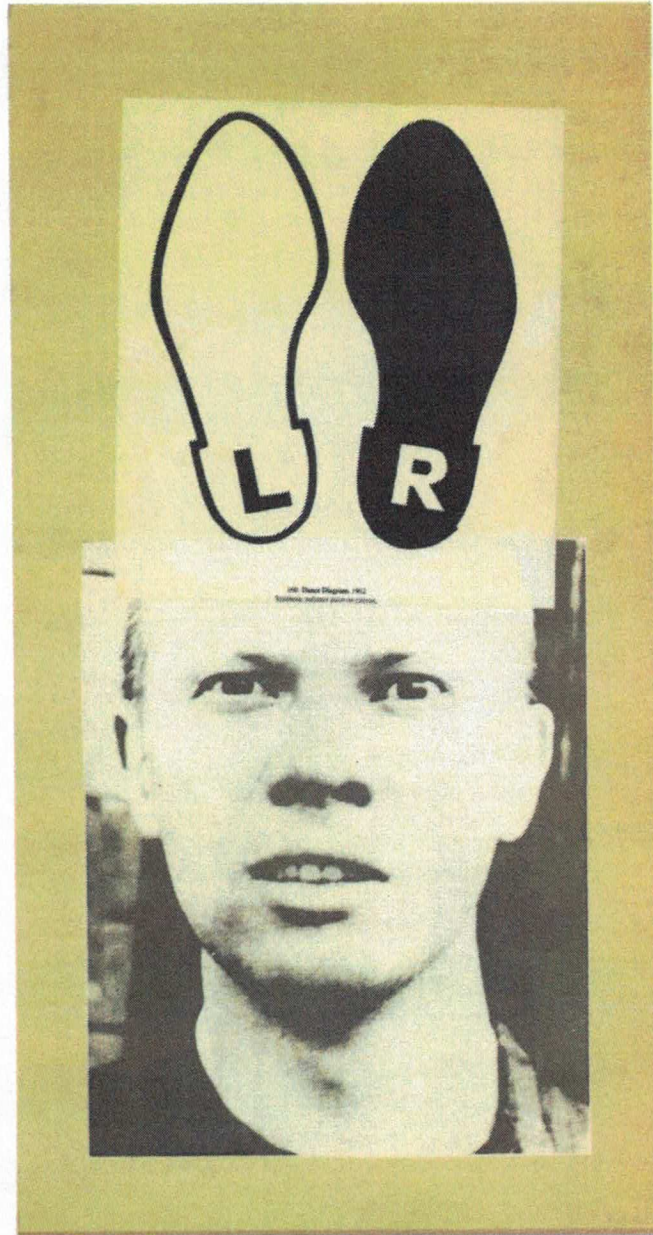
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Opinion (<https://news.artnet.com/opinion>)

## Ray Johnson and Andy Warhol: The Art World's Odd Couple

THE DAILY PIC: At Matthew Marks, a Johnson collage combines him and Warhol, but how close were they in life?

Blake Gopnik (<https://news.artnet.com/about/blake-gopnik-86>), June 7, 2017



**THE DAILY PIC (#1805):** In some ways, despite all his personal quirks and moments of radicalism, Ray Johnson was actually a fairly traditional modern artist: He used his unfailing artist's eye to transform material found in the world into dynamite compositions. Almost every one of the hundreds of [Johnson collages now on view at Matthew Marks](http://www.matthewmarks.com/new-york/exhibitions/2017-05-06_ray-johnson/) ([http://www.matthewmarks.com/new-york/exhibitions/2017-05-06\\_ray-johnson/](http://www.matthewmarks.com/new-york/exhibitions/2017-05-06_ray-johnson/)) is worth a good, long, connoisseurial look.

But I have to admit I chose today's Pic for other than aesthetic and connoisseurial reasons. In this 1992 piece, Johnson combines an early photograph of himself with a signature detail from one of [Andy Warhol](http://www.artnet.com/artists/andy-warhol/)'s *Dance Diagram* canvases, one of his most compelling series of works. The marriage of the two images creates a long-eared rabbit, the hallmark animal of Johnson's artistic iconography. Johnson's 1992 work suggests the closest of connections between the two artists, and it does look as though they'd been friends at least since the mid-1950s, when Warhol first began to discover the Downtown art scene that Johnson played in. There's all kinds of circumstantial evidence linking the two men and their earliest art, but nothing that counts as case-closed evidence. I'm convinced that they mattered hugely to each other, but I'm still hoping for more data to support my conviction. (©The Estate of Ray Johnson, Courtesy [Matthew Marks Gallery](http://www.artnet.com/galleries/matthew-marks-gallery/) (<http://www.artnet.com/galleries/matthew-marks-gallery/>))

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