

Fifteen Minutes Of...: Susan Stegall

A dozen or so art history students straggled into a tutorial room in which the screen behind the lectern was displaying a larger-than-life sized Andy Warhol print of Marilyn Monroe: signature peroxide blond hair, pouting lips and hooded eyelids in a lurid watermelon pink that matched the artwork's background. The colours were slightly out of sync, evoking an aloofness, a haughtiness as became her status as a famous movie star.

One young woman with spiky hair dyed a garish tomato red, hands on hips and a defiant tilt to her body, marched over to the tutor. 'Why do we have to learn about that stuff? It's very 1960s,' the girl declared, pointing an accusing finger at the screen. 'This is 2000 – a new millennium. Can't we discuss something more contemporary than an artist and his subject who have both outlived their fifteen minutes of fame – or whatever Warhol called it?'

'What do you suggest we study?' asked the tutor, a woman of a certain age who had taught more generations of students than anyone else at the art school.

The girl hesitated, not used to having a senior staff member ask her opinion.

Seizing the moment, the tutor continued. 'You're Sienna aren't you? Well, we could talk about colour – your hair for instance. How do you describe that particular hue?'

'Flame,' the young woman replied, pulling at the bristly strands. 'It's to go with an installation I'm making to critique the patriarchal, fascist culture of the Olympic games movement. I'm planning a protest when the torch relay passes through Manly next week.'

'Really?' The tutor raised an eyebrow. 'What do you intend to do?'

'Can't tell *you*,' Sienna muttered. 'But it will be BIG! Flaming fantastic! It'll be ...' She spread her arms wide and looked towards the other students who had gathered to enjoy the conversation.

The tutor looked sharply at the girl. 'You didn't finish your sentence. What were you going to say?'

'Fifteen minutes of flame,' Sienna replied boldly. 'That should draw attention to our cause.'

'Flame? As fame? And if it gets out of hand? Infamy more likely. Warhol's work has stood the test of time. You won't even be a nine days' wonder.'