

# Trash canned

Richard Roud on the limits of permissiveness on the New York scene

JUST ABOUT every year at this time, I seem to be writing a piece from New York gauging the new levels of permissiveness. This year can be no exception, for, notwithstanding President Nixon's onslaught against "pornography," the limits of what is allowed, at least in New York City, continue to roll back ever further.

Oh, to be sure, there are minor setbacks: occasionally a semi-hard-core film gets busted by the police, and the cinema goes back to the softer variety; the regular patrons complain bitterly, but soon the management takes heart and is back again with its old stand. The most important development this year is that the sex film has graduated from the fringes of Times Square and Greenwich Village: now we can find right smack in the middle of the smart East Side first-run art houses the latest Andy Warhol production, "Trash." Actually, it's not directed by Warhol, but by his Mr Morrissey who has already given us "Flesh." The film has been called "disgusting" by some critics; other have taken a more sophisticated position which boils down in essence to saying that "Trash" is just trashy, but then, that is all the clever Mr Morrissey ever claimed for it.

And he is clever. Given the fact that in these smart surroundings (the Silk Stocking district as it is still anachronistically called), the ban on erection and intromission still holds, he has built his whole film around this interdiction. The hero, played as in "Flesh" by the lusciously equivocal Joe Dallesandro, is impotent. And this is the whole point of the film: throughout its course, he is constantly pursued by ladies and gents who wish to partake of his undeniable charms. But Joe wants neither hero nor heroine, just heroin.

Although the film focuses largely on Dallesandro—and the metaphor: the first shot which lasts for about three minutes is entirely devoted to Joe's blotchy rump—the real star, at least for public and press, is one Holly

Woodlawn, who plays Joe's girl friend. Her main concern, apart from trying to turn on Joe—or any other male she can find—is to get their little ménage on welfare by pretending she is pregnant. Of course, it has to be a pretence, for not only is Joe impotent, but also because Holly happens to be a man.

Holly, né Harold Dankahl, is 23 years old; this is his (her) first film. Starting life as a high fashion mannequin (in the women's department, of course) at Saks Fifth Avenue, he then broke into show business by way of the aptly named Theatre of the Absurd, in the part of a razzle-dazzle chorus girl. Since his success with "Trash" he has already made another film for Warhol and Morrissey: it's called "Women in Revolt" and deals with the Women's Liberation movement. An up-to-date subject, of course, but an odd choice for Warhol, considering that he was almost killed by one of the leaders of SCUM (The Society for Cutting Up Men). Anyhow, Holly plays a lesbian in this one, "but badly," he is reported to have said, although he did enjoy his big love scene in an upside-down wheelchair.

This sort of thing is not new in New York: there has already been that darling of the underground, Mario Montez, but what is new is the general acceptance, the shift from the Village uptown. Holly got a half-page interview in the "New York Times," and after two months, the film is still running.

I don't think "Trash" is a particularly good film: Warhol, like Beckett, could have his boring moments, but these were part of the point of the film. Morrissey, it seems to me, is often boring because he can't help it. A subtle distinction, perhaps, but a valid one. Impotence is a fairly negative subject for a film, whatever its sociological convenience in this case. To be sure, Godot never got there, either, but it was much more fun waiting for him to arrive than for Joe to come.



Holly Woodlawn, né Harold Dankahl