Andy Warhol may have contributed more to Marilyn Monroe's mystique than Hollywood and the glossy magazines put together. Commercial movies and their public relations campaigns merely made her into a sex symbol and the prototype of the dumb blonde. She suffered under this image, as her various biographies, both fictitious and authentic, have since made clear. People laughed at Marilyn's ambition to be taken seriously as a thinking and feeling person, with only few exceptions. Her desire to play dramatic roles after successfully taking courses at the famous Actor's Studio in New York was looked upon as an infringement of the rules by the movie industry. Shortly after her death in 1962, possibly as a result of a fateful error, Warhol transformed a quite mundane publicity photo taken by the American photographer Frank Powolny in the early 1950s, into an icon of popular culture. When the picture was taken, Monroe had just managed to escape the pin-up calendars and postcards, much appreciated by G.I.s, for which she had posed while working in the armament industry. Thanks to notable minor roles in John Huston's Asphalt Jungle, 1950, and Joseph L. Mankiewicz's All About Eve, 1950, she had made her mark in ambitious Hollywood films. Yet Monroe was never entirely able to escape the label of sex bomb. Apart from her attractive figure, the movie industry merely exploited her comic talent, but continued to deny her the honour of being a serious actress. Bus Stop, 1956, by Joshua Logan, and The Misfits, 1960, another Huston film, were the only major roles that gave Monroe a chance to prove her dramatic talent. Many contemporary movie stars enjoyed greater reputations, in public as well as on screen, than she. It was only after her death that her true fame began; in fact, death seems to have been a condition for it. By placing the uninteresting photographic portrait with its forced, stereotypical smile in an expansive space that surrounds it like a dignified frame, and covering the whole field with gold — the colour of the Heavenly Jerusalem, which lends icons their supernatural effect — Warhol idealized it. The arched lips, the eyes, curly hair and face, deprived of volume and realism by the silkscreen technique, detach themselves from the background and float in front of and above it like stars in a golden sky. In many later versions, Warhol secularized the idol by constantly repeating or isolating the smile, and linked the myth of the star with the methods used by the mass media to make a star. By means of continually new variations and incessant sequences, as an industrialized product, a consumer commodity.