

ABSTRACT

This practice-led PhD investigates the complexities of the concept of kitsch in relation to art and aims to open up its discourses to new questioning in the context of artistic practice. The first part of the written element offers an analysis of the literature that established and developed the field in the 20th century with Greenberg, Adorno, Olalquiaga and Kulka as key theoreticians. With a focus on kitsch as a structural cipher in the shaping of modern and post-modern concepts, an argument is built for a correlation between its previous conceptual modifications and a discourse on belonging. A term or sentiment rendered problematic by Fascism, globalization and mass migration, the theorization of this correlation between kitsch and belonging is directed at a necessary re-orientating task for art itself. Rejecting both modernist arguments against kitsch and its contemporary nostalgic recuperation, an understanding of kitsch as a heterogeneous element is elaborated through Bataille's notions of the 'formless' and 'non-productive expenditure'. This understanding dispenses with previous conceptualizations of dialectic oppositions and instead interprets kitsch as a dynamic agent of cultural politics. Explained as an unassimilable remainder in the context of philosophical discourse and as surplus/waste in material terms, an argument is constructed for kitsch as a cultural 'recycling machine' and a marker between the useful and the useless that frees it from traditional hierarchies of class and taste. Arguing for an art that proclaims its status *vis-à-vis* the commodity not antagonistically but rather paradoxically, by embedding itself further within commodification, the concluding chapter addresses the practical implications for kitsch elaborated here. Through a consideration of the works of Jeff Koons, John Currin and Damien Hirst it proposes a strategy for artistic practice which can neither be reduced to contradictions nor appropriated, but deranges art itself from its traditionally allocated position.