POPULAR INQUIRY

EDITORIAL:
AESTHETICS GOES POP!

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No matter how philosophers define popular culture or whether they identify it with mass culture, there is little doubt that it has become an acknowledged field of research. Although popular culture has mainly been studied by culture scholars, philosophers are increasingly interested in it. With the arrival in the 90s of seminal works like N. Carrol's *A Philosophy of Mass Art* or R. Shusterman's *Pragmatist Aesthetics,* there has been a significant uptick in philosophical research regarding popular culture. Nevertheless, it still seems that popular culture is under-represented in the aesthetic literature due to philosophical oversight.

We thus notice a discrepancy. On one hand, current popular culture is the most lively and creative field of culture, since it suggests and routinely promotes – mainly in practice – new aesthetic categories. And thanks to popular culture's global reach, this ends up having a huge impact. On the other hand, it seems that philosophical aesthetics does not want to notice – or notices vaguely – such circumstances as if it is afraid of overstepping its traditional boundaries.

As a result, the following question arises. Since we are constantly bombarded with various forms of popular culture with little room for reprieve, how can it be that the popular discourse of philosophical aesthetics seems to offer little insight into the increasing pervasiveness of artists rendering 'lower' art forms? This reluctance is hardly due to philosophers' suspicions of the worlds of computer games, comic books, pornography or sport. Any reluctance appears rooted in methodological issues – what is or can be the relationship between aesthetics of the canonical, high culture and possible aesthetics of low, popular culture? Do they have different methodologies or just different subjects of inquiry? How could philosophical aesthetics be broadened? Would such a move be analogous to recent efforts that have allowed aestheticians to reflect upon the everyday or the natural environment (just to name two 'new' fields of aesthetic research identified in the past few decades)?

In light of the above questions (as well as many others), the papers selected for this volume prove particularly relevant. In lieu of giving unequivocal answers, their authors sketch possible perspectives for future research by analyzing different topics and presenting various standpoints.

The present special issue of *Popular Inquiry* consists of six articles of differing scopes and methodologies. Stemming from the analytic tradition, James Hamilton's paper "Arts & Ents" investigates conceptual and practical problems for philosophy that arise from its practitioners' tendency to privilege art over entertainment. For example, he questions the distinction between them and posits whether arts or entertainments could do philosophy in the same way that philosophy does it. Karan August's empirically-oriented article entitled "When Barbie Gets Tattoos; Does the increasing popularity of Tattoos and Tattooing impact their aesthetic value?" employs a Kantian framework to explore the possibility that tattoos have aesthetic and artistic values. Andrea Mecacci takes a different tack with his paper "The Aesthetics of Trash: A Short Overview," which draws a conceptual framework for "trash" as an aesthetic and anthropological category, making it particularly relevant for the current philosophical discussion. Sue Spaid's paper "Bellissima!: Reassessing *Access* to Redress Mass Art" presents a critical reading of Carroll's definition of "mass art" in order to propose a new view of "mass art" which she applies to his classic examples, as well as street art. Ashley Watkins' article "Gone but not Forgotten: Atmospheres, Death, and the Aesthetics of Goth" makes a case for Goth aesthetics by applying Gernot Böhme's work on aesthetic atmospheres, thus casting Goth aesthetics into the wider context of mourning rituals. Last but not least, David Collins' paper "Going Nowhere Fast: Associative Structure and the Absence of Causal Narrative Progression in *Loren Cass*" offers a close philosophical analysis of the cinematic work with a special focus on time and the work's associative rather than causal or linear structure.

We hope that all the "popular inquires" included in the present volume will contribute to popularizing the aesthetic perspective on popular culture. Aesthetics may be pop after all!