

# The New Aesthetics of Deculturation

**"This bold and laudably readable defense of the humanities links both the market worship of the neoliberal right and the empty relativism of the left to the abandonment of culture in kitsch. Even more, it offers clever and detailed analyses of a full range of contemporary sensibilities."**

**GARY CROSS**, author of *Packaged Pleasures: How Technology and Marketing Revolutionized Desire*

**"The book is both an ardent and well-argued defense for the leading role of the humanities in contemporary world and academia—the only reliable way to reculturation."**

**MIKHAIL EPSTEIN**, S. C. Dobbs Professor of Cultural Theory and Russian Literature, Emory University, USA

What are the predominant aesthetics of the 21st century? Thorsten Botz-Bornstein argues that deculturation, embodied by the conspicuous vulgarity of kitsch, is the overriding visual language of our times.

Drawing on the work of Olivier Roy, who argued that religious fundamentalism arises when religion is separated from indigenous cultural values, Botz-Bornstein shows that the production of 'absolute' truths

through deculturation is widespread in today's globalized environment.

The idea of culture is no longer available as a referent. Instead, we are taught to rely on the culturally neutral term 'excellence', which, for Botz-Bornstein, is an absolute value similar to the 'truth' of religious fundamentalists.

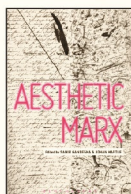
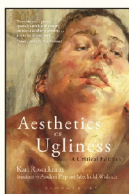
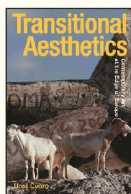
Kitsch is aesthetic fundamentalism, an aesthetics of excellence. The consumption of kitsch can be understood as an intrinsically narcissistic impulse, reinforced by social media, whereby individuals recycle their own selves without being confronted with the culture of the "other". The existence of fake news, conspiracy theories, and selfies are linked together in the fundamentalism–neoliberalism–kitsch pattern.

Including analysis of the intersections of 'cute', 'excellent', 'sublime', and 'interesting' in contemporary aesthetic culture, this is a journey through philosophy, psychology, and cultural theory, redefining a new aesthetics of deculturation.

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