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## PREFACE

The presented special issue of the „Cultural Studies Appendix” – an academic journal of the Institute of Cultural and Religious Studies at Faculty of Humanities of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw – features translations of various archive articles, which were published in previous issues of the journal over the period 2015-2017. The texts included in the thematic section, entitled *Kitsch in Contemporary Culture*, were originally published in issue 3/2016.

Staying true to the concept of interdisciplinary studies and the idea of studying the multitude of aspects of culture, its complexity and convolution, we decided to focus our academic endeavours on a number of issues, processes, texts and artistic depictions connected with various forms and manifestations of kitsch in contemporary culture. The phenomenon at hand seems to be important for studies in humanities, particularly those that concern the area of artistic cultural texts – since kitsch can be mediated by arts, literature, painting, music, sculpture and architecture, as well as those which aim for exploring the links between the nature of civilisational changes and transitions, and the processes occurring in the sphere of social behaviours, collective and individual mentality, values and ideas. Undoubtedly, we live in a time where kitsch is expanding. This phenomenon is associated primarily with the impact of mass media on the consciousness of contemporary individuals, particularly the pursuit of self-fulfilment and success that they promote and push onto people. Researchers studying this issue look at kitsch from many points of view, presenting a variety of classifications for cultural texts, which they tend to consider manifestations of ‘creation in a bad taste’. Thus, some of the deliberations focus on kitsch in television (in its many forms) and in opera, as well as religious, social, patriotic, totalitarian, Hollywood, exotic and even academic kitsch. These are of course selected randomly from among many kinds of kitsch. At the same time, the opinions that kitsch and ‘true art’ are entangled in the dialectic relation of mutual links and references, as well as that kitsch – despite being disregarded and despised – is a crucial element of the artistic system, seem to be justified and well-grounded. There is little doubt that high art pieces and kitsch enter into various kinds of relationships with each other, what is more, there are reasons to believe that sometimes only a mutual connection

between them allows them to achieve the expected aesthetic effect. This means that even an outstanding work can annex and use various elements and qualities that at first seem despicable – this happens for example in the case of *La Strada* by Federico Fellini, a film which is sometimes referred to as ‘kitsch with a philosophical load of *Hamlet*’.

We encourage you to explore the issues related to kitsch and other interesting topics undertaken outside the thematic section of this issue of the „Cultural Studies Appendix” together with Polish scholars.

The Editorial Staff