Kitsch in the Visual Arts and Advertisement of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

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Brigham Young University - Provo

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KITSCH IN THE VISUAL ARTS AND ADVERTISEMENT OF THE
CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Art
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Lori Schlinker
August 1971
The writer's reason for making this study is a felt lack of taste and a general misunderstanding and misuse of the visual arts in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. She is convinced that art, generally considered as a matter of personal taste, is actually a matter of professional judgement. A characteristic of our time is the "do-it-yourself" trend and to make up one's own mind about everything without any consultation of authorities and also a loss of feeling for integrity in productions of the human mind and hand which broke down the fences against kitsch and opened up the way, not only into man's environment, but also into his thinking. May the reader find in this study a help towards a better understanding and a greater awareness of the problem of kitsch.

Special thanks is extended to Professor Alexander B. Darais the chairman and Professor Floyd E. Breinholt the member of my committee and to Wulf E. Barsch, Mark J. Freckleton, Leon Hale, Professor Ed Maryon, Professor Conan E. Mathews, Professor Hugh W. Nibley and Professor Roland Segrist, the seven persons interviewed in this thesis, for their time, patience and kind assistance.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. DEFINITION OF THE TERM KITSCH</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SEVEN INTERVIEWS ON KITSCH IN THE CHURCH</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Number One (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Number Two (22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Number Three (33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Number Four (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Number Five (55)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Number Six (60)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Number Seven (64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. REASONS FOR AND REASONS AGAINST KITSCH</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are There Reasons for Kitsch? (72)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction (72)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons Against Kitsch (76)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion (85)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SUMMARY</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Outcomings of the Interview (86)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Study (88)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose (88)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem (88)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research (89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings and Conclusion (89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations (90)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................. 91
APPENDICES ................................................................. 94
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Painter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Signs of the True Church</td>
<td>Sidney King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jesus Christ Testifies of Joseph Smith</td>
<td>Harry Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Christ Organized His Church</td>
<td>Harry Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Isaiah Prophesying of the Virgin</td>
<td>Harry Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Baptism by Immersion</td>
<td>Robert Skemp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Repentence</td>
<td>Robert Skepp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Gift of the Holy Ghost</td>
<td>Robert Skemp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ</td>
<td>Robert Skemp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Purpose of Life</td>
<td>Robert Skemp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Life's Greatest Questions</td>
<td>Sidney King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Resurrected Savior Appeared on the Western Hemisphere</td>
<td>Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Abinadi before King Noah</td>
<td>Arnold Friberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove</td>
<td>Harold T. Kilboum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Prophet Joseph Smith (Portrait)</td>
<td>Alvin Gittens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Visual Aids (used by missionaries of the Church)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Visual Aids (used by missionaries of the Church)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Visual Aids (used by missionaries of the Church)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to introduce the term kitsch and clarify its meaning and to attain an insight by making accessible opinions about the visual arts and advertisement of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints by means of seven interviews and consultation of literature on the subject. The persons interviewed in this thesis were assumed to be familiar with kitsch and were particularly selected to represent viewpoints from completely different angles. Very professional as well as less professional answers were expected.

Professor Maryon, the present Dean of the College of Fine Art and former Chairman of the Art Department of the University of Utah, has been in this office for fourteen years (since 1957). Professor Mathews has been the former Dean of the College of Fine Art of the Brigham Young University for eleven years (from 1956 until 1967). Professor Nibley is widely known as an LDS scholar. Professor Siegrist is from Switzerland and not a member of the Church and was chosen to represent an opinion from the outside. Mr. Barsch is a convert from Germany, has spent a mission for the Church in California and gained experiences
in Europe and America and as an assistant and faculty member at the Brigham Young University. Mr. Freckleton has gained missionary experiences in Austria and is a student at the Brigham Young University, presently majoring in German. Mr. Hale is a returned missionary from Germany and Assistant Exhibit Designer for the Church Information Service in Salt Lake City. He was chosen as a person who would give an indication of some of the general attitudes towards the arts among the personnel working for the Church.

The interviews are all life style and the questions have been adapted to the different personalities and their fields.

The illustrations, which are reproductions used by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as visual material for various purposes are here included to assist the reader to understand what is discussed and to represent an example of material that most often becomes kitsch by the way it is used.

Restrictions

This study was restricted to art work commissioned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Definition of Terms

The General Authorities.—Synonymous with the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and their assistants.
CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF THE TERM KITSCH

Introduction

The term kitsch is very little known in the United States among the broad public as well as among artists in their different fields. Therefore, a thorough investigation was made to determine its origin and its true meaning. No equivalent is existing in the English language, it therefore was adopted in the year of 1966.¹

Research

American, English and German encyclopedias and dictionaries have been consulted for a comparison of the different definitions of kitsch and reference was taken from the most qualified international authorities on the subject.

The word kitsch could have derived etymologically from the English "sketch" or, according to other opinions, from the German verb "verkitschen" (to make cheap).

Encyclopedias that find the origin of kitsch in the English term "sketch" are:

¹Adopted by usage since there is no committee in the U.S. that actually coins words. Kitsch appears for the first time in the Randomhouse Dictionary of the English language, unabridged edition, 1966.
The German Encyclopædia, Sachwörterbuch der Literatur von Gero von Wilpert (1969),

kitsch (distorted from Engl. sketch = skizze, cheap painting for Engl.-American purchasers in Munich), pseudo art which is easy to sell, adapted to broad taste, thus tasteless, affected and without artistic value. It derives ostensible claims to a certain degree of validity through imitating a recognized artist in a plebian, distorted fashion.\(^2\)

The German Encyclopædia Der Neue Brockhaus (1965),

kitsch [perhaps from English "skelch" Skizze; Bismarck time] collective concept for tasteless pretentious artistic productions of painting, sculpture, architecture, crafts, literature, music and film which are affected because they replace beauty by gloss, feeling by sentimentality, greatness by pose and empty solemnity, tragedy by sensation or avoid it through a happy end.\(^3\)

Encyclopaedias that find the origin of kitsch in the German verb "kitschen," to collect rubbish from the street, are:

The Randomhouse Dictionary of the English Language, unabridged edition (1966),

kitsch (kich), n. art or literature judged to have little or no aesthetic value, esp. when produced to satisfy popular taste [\(<G, deriv. of kitschen to throw together a work of art\(<dial.\>\)]


kitsch (kich) n. [G. gaudy trash\(<dial. kitschen to smear\>] art, writing etc. of a pretentious, but shallow kind, calculated to have popular appeal--kitsch'y adj.

---

\(^2\)Translated from German into English by the author.

Note: all translations from German into the English language were made by the author.

\(^3\)Ibid.
Webster's Third International Dictionary, unabridged edition (1969),

kitsch |ˈkich|n-es [G. fr. kitschen to slap (a work of art) together, fr. G. dial., to scrape up mud from the street]: artistic or literary material held to be of low quality, often produced to appeal to popular taste, and marked esp. by sentimentalism, sensationalism and slickness<the traditional gap . . . between -and literatur--William Phillips b. 1907>

The World Book Dictionary Field Enterprise Educational Corporation, Chicago (1967),

kitsch (kich), n. a shallow or pretentious artistic production: . . . conscience forbids them to indulge in the kind of kitsch that would guarantee a hit (New Yorker) [<German (colloquial) kitschtrash]

Dictionary of Foreign Language and Phrases in Current English (1966) by A. J. Bliss,

kitsch [Ger.] worthless rubbish, esp. as a derogatory term for forms or works of art which are felt to be shoddy or gaudy 20c.

As distinguished in the German Encyclopaedia Der Neue Brockhaus (1965) kitsch finds its way into all the different areas of art but it is also to be found in religions, politics and the field of erotics and sex.


kitsch pseudo artistic design; replaces lacking strength of form by stimulations of the imagination with (erotic, politic, religious, sentimental) content.

The fact that mass production is tied into the realm of kitsch suggests that if not used for what they are, even reproductions, copies of artifacts and records can become kitsch.
kitsch a blatantly sentimental, slick or pretentious artistic production or design, kitsch, usually of low quality and sometimes mass produced, is intended to appeal to popular tastes.

Gillo Dorfles in his book KITSCH, the World of Bad Taste gives a derivation of the word kitsch:

Certain writers claim that the word derives from the English "sketch," while others attribute it to the German verb et was verkitschen ("knock off cheaply"). Giesz\(^4\) attributes it to kitschen, meaning den Strassenschlamm zusammenscharren, literally "to collect rubbish from the street" which in effect is the interpretation closest to the concept of "artistic rubbish" and might be linked to the term "junk art." This latter term has been used by English and American writers for a certain type of art which makes use of refuse taken bodily from the rubbish dump. The word kitschmensch, meaning "kitsch-man" is used by Giesz in his book and should I think be taken in the English language.\(^5\)

The term "kitsch-man" was first used by Hermann Broch\(^6\) and can serve as a cue as to where kitsch begins.

For the "challenge" of kitsch-man aims above all to reach that area where the question of kitsch or non-kitsch is decided; i.e., the life and experience of man. In other words, what is involved is an analysis of kitsch consciousness, which is how, finally, we judge whether a thing is kitsch or not. 

\[\ldots\] we are using "kitsch-man" in the sense of a specific inclination in man to produce kitsch or to take pleasure in it.\(^7\)


\(^7\)Giez, op. cit.
The same author on where kitsch began:

... when and where does kitsch begin? Let us quote the two extreme positions: (a) kitsch has always existed or (b) kitsch was born in the second half of the nineteenth century (vulgarized Romanticism plus the emancipation of the petite bourgeoisie).

At this juncture we reach point (b): sociological consideration, and the following problem isn't kitsch perhaps a characteristics of every mass age, beginning with the age of Alexander and Roman Hellenism in the ancient world, down to the one-dimensional man of the mid-twentieth century?  

English terms that are closest in meaning to kitsch are:

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1967),

mawkish (mawkishness n.) |'mo-kish|adj. 1: having an insipid often unpleasant taste 2: sickly or puerilely sentimental.

Webster's original edition from 1928,

cant . . . 3: The whining speech of beggars, as in asking alms . . . 4: The peculiar words and phrases of professional men; phrases often repeated or not well authorized. 5: Any barbarous jargon in speech. 6: Whining pretention to goodness.

Johnson.

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1967)

cant v. . . . 3. to talk hypocritically.
cant n. often attrib. 1: affected singsong speech 2a: Argot 1 b obs: the phraseology peculiar to a religious class or sect c: Jargon 2: the expression or repetition of conventional, trite, or unconsidered opinions or sentiments; esp.: the insincere use of pious phraseology . . .

In Cassel's New German Dictionary (1966) kitsch is translated as:

kitsch m. rubbish, trash, daub (of pictures)
kitschig adj. rubbishy, trashy, inartistic, showy.

8Ibid.
The Yiddish term shlock or schlock should also be noted as being used for kitsch more and more among artists in America.


shlock
or schlack
or schlock 1) A shoddy, cheaply made article. "It's a piece of shlock." "Where did you buy that? In a shlock-house?" 2) A defective or fake article; an object one was cheated over. "That watch will never keep time. It's shlock merchandise." . . . 4) A shrew, a whining wife, . . . .

and another spelling:

shlak . . . shoddy, shoddy merchandise, shlak joint: store that sells cheap, inferior merchandise, second-hand or cut-rate goods, where bargaining over prices is important (Americanism).

Essays on kitsch have been written as early as 1933 and 1939 by authors like Hermann Broch and Clement Greenberg who are considered as international authorities on the subject. As listed in Webster's Third International Dictionary (1969) unabridged edition, a William Phillips has used the term kitsch for the first time in English literature in 1907; the author has not been able to find any more information concerning that matter.


10 Broch, Dichten und Erkennen, op. cit.


Interview Number One

Interview held between Leon Hale, Assistant Exhibit Designer for the Church Information Service, also returned missionary from Germany and the author, Salt Lake City, June, 1971.

Mr. Hale's statements in this interview are not necessarily representative of the Church or the CIS (Church Information Service) Committee; they are his personal opinions.

Author: Five of eleven mural paintings in the Church Visitor's Center on Temple Square by Sidney King have been substituted by paintings by Harry Anderson in subsequence of complaints made by a number of visitors. Is that true?

Hale: Yes.

Author: I was told, Mr. King was in a big hurry, when he painted those murals, do you know anything about that?

Hale: Well, I can tell an interesting story about him. He was commissioned to paint the paintings upstairs in the Visitor's Center on the life of Christ for the World Fair in New York. From
what I understand he painted those paintings back East; he lives back East somewhere. They tell this story about him: One early morning when he was about finished with the paintings, and had just come back from the barn (his studio), his wife, who is an invalid, and cannot move herself very well, sensed that something was wrong and pulled herself over to the window. There she saw smoke coming out of the barn and somehow was able to attract her husband who went out and was able to put out the fire. This happened about two weeks before the New York World's Fair opened. It would have been a real tragedy if they had burned. A lot of people think they are great.

Author: Do you have any idea which kind of people like them and which people generally don't like them?

Hale: I think those people who are uneducated as to art would probably be kind of excited about them. If you have ever been exposed to some great painting though, I don't think they would mean much to you; because generally his figures are poorly painted. Mr. King has one really good thing about his painting, he can handle skies and backdrop situations very well. He is the one that painted the huge rotunda\(^1\) at the

\(^1\)See Appendix 10.
LDS Visitor's Center in the back of the Christ Statue, the Christus by Thorvaldsen the huge sky area which is beautifully done. If you ever get a chance to look at those King murals you will see that the skies are really the best part of them.

Author: What do you know about why these paintings by Mr. King were taken down and substituted by paintings by Mr. Anderson?

Hale: Mainly because General Authorities have received a lot of criticism from people concerning the paintings.

Author: Which kind of people, could you specify that?

Hale: People who have come through in tours have been upset by them one way or another.

Author: Do you think that the quantity of people determined the change of the paintings, or was it the criticism of any particular kind of people which finally caused these paintings to be taken down?

Hale: Well, ultimately, the General Authorities have to be convinced that that is the thing to do. If, for instance, Brother Peterson, who is the head of the CIS Committee, the Church Information Service Committee, were not convinced that they should be changed, they would never be changed, no matter how many letters were written.
But he knows good art and he has been persuaded that some of them ought to be changed. Now, probably over the years, most of them will be changed. But you have to realize it is a very touchy situation, because Mr. King is very sensitive about them. The first thing you don't want to do is alienate somebody, just because of a painting, a painting isn't all that important.

Author: Especially to destroy somebody's painting by completely having it overpainted, that is kind of a cruel act, even though the painting might not be of good quality.

Hale: Well, they have never really destroyed any of those paintings.

Author: What have they done to them?

Hale: They have taken them from the wall and rolled them up and a new canvas has been substituted in place of them.

Author: That sounds more reasonable. I heard that Mr. Anderson is not painting those paintings himself but somebody else is executing them instead.

Hale: That is right.

Author: How was that done and why?

Hale: Well, Harry Anderson is a very expensive painter and painters tend to sell their paintings by the
amount of time involved and the size of the painting. To have Mr. Anderson paint murals of that size which measure about five by six feet tall, would be astronomical in proportions to pay for. So, as a rule of thumb, Mr. Anderson has been supplying us with a smaller original which we had blown up and replaced on the wall by an artist here in Salt Lake City. It is an identical reproduction; for most people, I think it would be hard to find the difference between the two.

Author: I see, Harry Anderson painted for all kinds of people, is that right?

Hale: I think his specialty is religious art.

Author: Does he paint for different churches?

Hale: I have seen some calendars he has done for different churches.

Author: Do you consider Harry Anderson a painter as well as an illustrator?

Hale: I would say, from my personal point of view, that Harry Anderson is more of a painter than an illustrator. His paintings are very solid, you always feel like you could actually walk up, grasp one of his figures and take it right out; he has an exceptional use of light in his paintings, which tends to give all of his figures an air of realism that few other painters have
been able to catch, as far as I have seen. Sometimes, I think his composition is a little stale, there is nothing really exciting, but at the same time it's very believable . . . it isn't doing anything that surprises you.

Author: What kind of style would you say, is he working in? Is he working realistically?

Hale: He paints about as any artist does for the Church, just what the Church asked him to do. The General Authorities are somewhat conservative in their outlook, which is to be understood because we certainly don't want to put across the impression of lightmindedness or anything offensive about our painting, at least the paintings that are used in the Visitor's Centers. We try to appeal to someone's heart rather than his sense of artistic value. Therefore, most of the paintings that have been going in lately, by Harry Anderson and others, have tended to be very realistic in their approach. I think Harry Anderson is well liked by the General Authorities because his compositions are so realistic. Rather than using gimmicks to get the idea across he portrays an actual scene, as if you were actually there.

Author: Do you know if Harry Anderson paints on his own, just for himself, not being commissioned?
Hale: I don't know what he is doing right now, I am certain that in times past he had relied quite heavily on his own work. Certainly, there were times, when we had him do a piece of art work that has come back and we have had to change it. For instance he likes to put wings on angels which is not an LDS concept, in fact when we received from him the painting which shows the second coming of Christ and is now in Independence, it had wings on all the angels clear up into the heavens and no amount of persuasion would make him change that. So when we copied it for the Visitor's Center we just removed all the wings. So there are certain things you can't tell him to do. He still has that certain amount of "I'll do it my way or else" attitude about it.

Author: What is his belief, which church does he belong to?

Hale: I believe he is Seventh-Day Adventist. He has made it known to us that he doesn't want to work on any subject other than biblical. For that reason he doesn't do anything about the Book of Mormon, the Latter-Day Church, Joseph Smith, the restoration of the Church or anything of this kind. He works exclusively on biblical themes.
Let's look at Arnold Friberg for awhile, do you consider him to be a painter, an illustrator or both?  

I think his work probably tends to be more illustrative than painting. I am not sure if he would agree with that. I do know that his paintings are not very well liked by the German people.

His paintings tend to be very sweet, dripping with colour—waterfalls, bluebirds, sunsets and so on.

And flesh and muscles too, everything in abundance.

Yes.

How is your personal opinion about him, how do you like his work?

I have never met Arnold Friberg. From what I understand, he would be doing more things for the Church, but there is a matter of politics involved and we just haven't used him. There are probably some hard feelings about that.

The Church has never officially used him?

Oh yes, all of the Book of Mormon scenes that he did were commissioned by the Church.

Arnold Friberg works for other people, other than the Church, too, doesn't he?

---

2See Appendix 12.
Hale: Yes.

Author: Have you seen the illustrations that he did for the film The Ten Commandments?

Hale: Yes.

Author: How do you feel about them? Could you define them a little?

Hale: I think for the purpose for which they were painted they are very well done. I understand they were painted more as a costume design and to give backgrounds for the movie. I don't think I personally would want them hanging in my home, but they are great costume designs.

Author: What is the reason that you would not personally hang them up in your home?

Hale: Well, personally I am just more excited by modern works of art.

Author: I see. You spent a two-year mission in Germany?

Hale: Yes.

Author: When you came back from your mission did you see the art in the Church somewhat with different eyes?

Hale: Certainly, I received a complete education in art as other people look at it. Before I went on my mission I really didn't have much of a view of Church art. I don't think that I had ever seen works by Arnold Friberg and I was really surprised that the Germans didn't like
it. We found out rather quickly that they didn't, but I think they still use them on some of their door approaches. When I came back I was exposed to works that I thought were much better, for instance by Harry Anderson, Ken Riley, John Falter and some of these.

Author: What kind of an artist is Ken Riley?
Hale: Ken in my estimation is a very fine painter; his design in painting is almost beyond reproach. In fact, he uses design to his advantage more than any of the artists that we have used.

Author: What does John Falter do for the Church?
Hale: John Falter is an illustrator, basically, as is Ken Riley. He has just recently done two works of art for us involving the restoration of the Church. Both of the originals hang in the Independence Visitors' Center in Missouri. His paintings tend to be very designing too, he does a lot of things for Readers' Digest from what I understand and he always uses an interesting play of light in his pictures. I think, to be honest with him, his paintings may tend to be a little kitschy too.

Author: Which of the painters we have talked about so far, do you think is the most sophisticated, from an artistic point of view?
Hale: I would say the most sophisticated one is one we have not yet talked about—John Scott.

Author: What are his paintings like?

Hale: John Scott has done two pieces of work for us: The first and best known of his is "Christ Visiting the Nephites"; this is downstairs in the Visitors' Center on Temple Square. It is a huge painting that measures about thirty feet long by twenty feet high, or so. His paintings have a very realistic look. He doesn't depend on design or any gimmicks either, he is very straightforward and paints what he sees. He is not a member of the Church but he is a very fine man and has done some exceptional pieces of work for us. The second piece of work he did is "Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove," which is also hanging in Independence.

Author: Do you enjoy portrait paintings by Alvin Gittens?

Hale: Yes.

Author: How do you like Skemp's work as illustrator for the Church?

Hale: I think it would be tough by looking at them to tell which Church they represent.

Author: Do Skemp's paintings look quite a bit photographic to you; could they be mistaken for

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Identical with "Christ on the Western Hemisphere." See Appendix 11.
photography?

Hale: They are certainly very realistic in their design, it looks like he copied them off of a slide.

Author: Could you imagine that somebody who saw these reproductions⁴ would mistake them for photography?

Hale: I think some people might.

Author: You wouldn't?

Hale: I wouldn't, no.

Author: How important do you think, was the time you spent in Europe for your understanding and evaluation of art? Has it helped you?

Hale: Of course, while I was in Germany I was able to be exposed to a lot of great art because every once in awhile we were able to go to a museum, and I saw a lot of Rubens' and Gainsboroughs' and others of the old masters. I also saw a lot of Michelangelos' in Florence and in Rome; I went to Italy when I was coming home. I'll have to admit after seeing that calibre of work my outlook on art really changed.

Author: Do you think that it is important for any artist or anybody who deals with art to have an understanding of the old masters and to have been exposed to some of them?

⁴See Appendices 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.
Hale: Certainly. I think the understanding of a picture is pretty well subjective anyway, because what I see in a painting isn't necessarily the same thing you see. I have seen people who looked at the painting by Sidney King that shows Christ with John the Baptist and said, "Oh, how marvelous," and little kids like it, because it approaches their understanding. It is more the type of thing a child would draw, whereas a child might not get excited about a Harry Anderson painting, although it is much more realistic and solid.  

Author: Do you think a painting like the one by Mr. King can be uplifting to children and adults?

Hale: Certainly.

Author: Assuming that is the case, do you think the fact that a number of people, most of them without much education, can be promoted and strengthened in faith is enough reason for the Church to turn out paintings like his, which on the other hand prevent people with a little more education to investigate the Church?

Hale: Well, I think you have to make a comparison between how many people this painting by Mr. 

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5See Appendix 1.

6See Appendix 3.
King will affect, compared to the number that will be affected by Mr. Anderson's painting. Certainly this may interest two hundred people just because it is there, but this one may interest one thousand because of the fine qualities involved in it, and the fact that they can see that we are not just bluffing. This (by King) anybody could produce, but I think it takes a real artist to produce that one (by Anderson) or someone who really understands art.

Author: Do you believe that taste could be taught to the membership of the Church?
Hale: Yes, but I think that would be difficult.
Author: But do you believe it is possible?
Hale: You bet.
Author: Thank you, that seems very optimistic to me.

Interview Number Two

Interview held between Mark John Freckleton, student at Brigham Young University and returned missionary from Austria, and the author, Provo, Utah, June, 1971.

Author: What did you study before you went to Austria?
Freckleton: My major was art.
Author: And what are you studying now?
Freckleton: Right now, I am still registered as an art major, but I will most likely switch over to German this summer.
Author: When you came back from your mission, did you see somewhat with different eyes?

Freckleton: Oh, I would imagine so.

Author: Especially concerning art?

Freckleton: It is hard for me to remember how I thought about art before my mission, but there are a lot of other things about which I have changed my opinion quite a bit.

Author: Did you have the chance to visit a few museums and exhibitions while you were over there?

Freckleton: Once in a while, yes.

Author: How is the work of artists who work for the Church different from that of the artists you have seen in Austria?

Freckleton: The Church artists are illustrating their point; they are usually showing an event or a principle and they illustrate it rather than trying to make a great painting out of it.

Author: Are all of the artists who work for the Church illustrators in your opinion or are there some who you would call painters?

Freckleton: My opinion is not likely to be as sophisticated as a lot of peoples' who have studied art more than I have. I think Harry Anderson is an illustrator, but his pictures really put the point across quite well, and I find him rather artistic too.
Author: Do you find him sophisticated as an illustrator?

Freckleton: Of course. He is one of the top illustrators in America.

Author: What about Arnold Friberg?

Freckleton: His paintings are a little idealistic sometimes.

Author: What do you understand by idealistic?

Freckleton: Like the men all have twenty-inch biceps, you know what I mean? Even when Abinadi is standing in front of King Noah he has a bigger build than I do though he has been in chains for a couple of years.

Author: How would you describe this kind of distortion. Don't you find distortions in the art of other periods like Renaissance, for example, too?

Freckleton: O, yes. I have seen pictures of Christ that make Him look like there is no way that He could have ever cleansed out the temple in Jerusalem, because He looks more effeminate than anything else.

Author: Why do those enlarged biceps, for example, in Friberg's paintings, bother you?

Freckleton: Well, because it's not realistic. I mean, the Nephites were big people, but I imagine they were just big in size and the general relationship would compare about the same as what we

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7See Appendix 12.
have right now, but I don't think they were all musclemen.

Author: You mean realistic in relationship to history not in relationship to style. Is that correct?

Freckleton: Well, I can say something about the style, too. I mean realistic in any sense of the word. You won't find that many people that are all that big and muscular together, like in his paintings. As long as he is trying to illustrate something he should make it somewhat like it really is, though he doesn't have to make it absolutely naturalistic. He does have a lot of talent which he seems to use as an illustrator instead of as a painter. He has illustrated a lot of other things besides Church work. He did a series of pictures about the history of football for the hundredth anniversary of football, 1967, I think, which were quite well--of course, football players are big anyway.

Author: Did you show any of his illustrations to people in Austria?

Freckleton: I had what we call a flip book; the first one I made had a map of the world with a Book of Mormon on one continent and the Bible on the other. With that I used a series of his illustrations and one by Scott showing Christ in
Author: How did people react?

Freckleton: Most people I talked to weren't of the very upper class so they seemed to enjoy them. Later on in my mission, I made something up on my own.

Author: Why did you do that?

Freckleton: Because I don't like Arnold Friberg's illustrations.

Author: You said people of lower classes liked Friberg's illustrations. How about people in higher classes. Did you meet those and did you show the illustrations to them?

Freckleton: It depended on how I felt—how open minded they were. I figured if someone was spiritually prepared for the Gospel, a stupid little picture wouldn't drive them away, but it would be a great asset in teaching. A picture is worth a thousand words plus they remember better what they see than what they hear. In the second book that I made, I used some of his and some that I had cut out of brochures and tracts.

Author: Church brochures?

Freckleton: Yes. I tried to render them as well as I could to make it look good. I only used some of the

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8See Appendix 11.
very best of his to show the story of the Book of Mormon.

Author: What about those best ones. Did you ever find people not liking those?

Freckleton: Well, they didn't say. Once in a while, we would get kind of a feeling that they didn't like them but no one ever said anything about them.

Author: Did you have the feeling they wanted to be polite?

Freckleton: Sometimes, however, I talked to some members, of course, this is kind of a small segment of the population, who said don't worry about that because the Austrians used to be very critical about colour maybe five years ago, but the new style has come in with all the bright colours and everything and it might be all right. I had the idea that if people see a picture about the Book of Mormon or some principles of the Church, even if it's kitschy, they will remember that longer than anything I can say.

Author: You were permitted to change the visual aids if you wanted to?

Freckleton: Yes, we were encouraged to.

9See Appendix 15.
Author: When you came back to America, were you in any way offended by art that was used in the Church?

Freckleton: I will say something about art in the Church. The art in the Church is intended mainly for the American intellect. I am an American and since I have grown up with Americans, my ideas are quite similar. A lot of my ideas have changed since I have been in Europe for two years, but they mostly have to do with sociology and not so much with art. I don't know why that's the way it is. I like bright colors for example, and if they are well used and go together, bright colors in painting don't bother me at all. But then sometimes they seem raw—I don't know—it is hard for me to express myself.

Author: You have seen paintings by old masters in the museums did you find some of them quite colorful, some even really bright too, in spite of much darkening and fading away that took place over the years?

Freckleton: Well, of course, there are certain ups and downs in view of history. My favorite artists are the impressionists. I really like their use of colour. I like Rembrandt too, not so much for his use of colour—he didn't use much—
but for his use of light.

Author: As far as I understand, you believe that it approaches better the American philosophy, the American way of life, to have bright colours. Do you then also think that illustrations of the kind of Arnold Friberg's and even Harry Anderson's find their way better to an American than to a European?

Freckleton: Oh, definitely. For example, I always had a preference for colored photography over black and white.

Author: What would you prefer—a very realistic painting or a photograph of an object?

Freckleton: How realistic, naturalistic?

Author: Naturalistic.

Freckleton: I would prefer photography above the naturalistic painting. But I prefer a well done painting to photography. I think one of the best things that the Church could do would be to have European artists make illustrations for Europe.

Author: Do you think members of the Church could be educated to recognize kitsch?

Freckleton: I don't think you could ever change the opinion of the Church members at large as far as art is concerned because I have experienced this: several times for example, missionaries I was with in the mission field would take a look at
a Van Gogh painting and say I just can't understand why that is so great. I could do that myself in ten minutes, or whatever.

Author: What did you say?

Freckleton: I challenged them to try it. They just have their opinion, you see. That's what they thought and there was nothing to bring them from that opinion and I wasn't going to try too hard for the sake of unity and companionship. I think that's how the majority of the Church members are. They stick to their own opinion, even when educated. Those missionaries' opinions on art were based on ignorance of course, because they never had experiences in art and never studied anything about it. Educating the Church members could give a more sophisticated idea of art. But it is a relative thing as to what's more sophisticated, American or European art. It depends on whether you are an American or a European.

Author: Does it really depend on that or does it depend on the cultural development of the people?

Freckleton: It's a relative thing as to which culture is the better of the two.

Author: Many of the first immigrants of America did not bring very much culture and education. In fact, quite a number of them were outcasts of society.
They came to settle this continent, they worked hard, they had to, and became as the world seems to see it, very practically oriented. Do you think this might have been a reason that prevented the American people to spend enough time—so far—to develop their culture?

Freckleton: Well, they seem to have done it now. Of course, when they first got here there was no real high society until well into the 1800's. So they didn't have time to worry about literature, painting, sculpture and music. Where the standard of living is concerned, it is like playing catch-up ball—they are still trying to catch up on Europeans. There really aren't that many great American painters or have been up until now, though, in music, America is at the present time almost equal to Europe, I would say.

Author: Do you think Americans consider Europe still as their country of heritage or the European people as their parents, their ancestors so to say?

Freckleton: My ancestors came from Scotland, Ireland, England, France, Holland and Germany, quite a mixture, but I always thought of my parents as coming from the Eastern States of America rather than Europe.
Author: Which people do you think are most receptive to kitsch?

Freckleton: The less educated.

Author: Is it a matter of education to recognize kitsch and to prevent it?

Freckleton: Yes, because there are all kinds of people who have prints hanging on the walls of their houses that were mass produced, hundreds of them, all of bad quality, and the rooms are crowded with souvenirs, just picked up anywhere; these people are usually less educated. When you go up to the more elite part of Provo, to the richer people, you find their homes done more tastefully—sometimes done by a decorator. And original paintings are hanging on the walls—I don't know if that has anything to do with social standing or education in that case.

Author: Have you also seen homes of wealthy people where there was even more kitsch than on the average?

Freckleton: Yes, I have seen that, but they are just wealthy and not educated, I find. I think the trend is to over decorate, have too many things like vases and figurines and other cheap and decorative material.
Author:  The American people have worked hard and struggled much to reach this state of wealth that has been achieved now. Would you hold it possible that overly practical minded Americans tend to choose super sweet artistic material (like souvenirs, decoration for decoration's sake) out of an urge to escape an extremely flat, insipid, dry atmosphere?

Freckleton: If someone is so hard working and practical minded he sometimes doesn't know or care enough about art to be really aesthetic in home decoration. You can see it in other things, such as dresses. Some people I see with a suit or shoes, etc. . . . that I wonder why they ever chose that--it is almost like they took the first thing they found. I just imagine they don't care that much. Or they want something--referring back to art--that they don't have to think about to understand--a vase of flowers, a landscape, a print of "Blue Boy."

Interview Number Three

Interview held between Wulf Barsch, Graduate Student and Assistant at the Brigham Young University, and the author, Provo, June, 1971.

Author: Where did you grow up?

Barsch: In Germany.
Author: Where did you study art?
Barsch: Mainly in Europe and in America. The Bachelor's Degree in Europe and the Master's Degree in America, in Utah.

Author: When did you become a member of the Church?

Author: Where did you spend your mission for the Church? and when?

Author: Did you use visual aids in your missionary work?
Barsch: Some.

Author: Why did you not use all?
Barsch: I did not use any of the Church published visual aids. I made my own out of books from Greco and Rembrandt and others.

Author: Why did you use your own and not the ones published by the Church?
Barsch: Because the Church published visual aids\textsuperscript{10} are only harmful to the cause, I would say. The ones which I used, I used in a way that would help people just remember a little bit easier what I was talking about, but normally, I think, visual aids can be as dangerous, as negative, as they can be positive. It depends

\textsuperscript{10}See Appendix 15.
just on how you use them and what kind of material you use. But I don't think, especially the flannel board helps really a lot because it makes people forget easier, they don't really have to--intensely listen to you because if you ask them a question they refer back to the flannel board and read off just what you asked them. You say something like: what was the foundation of the Church? and there is a little building on the flannel board where it says, Foundation: Apostle and Prophets, so they don't have to remember it, they just look at the flannel board and read it off. I don't think that makes any sense. It is called discussions and I think you should be able to discuss and people should remember what you say, that it gets into them. Because it mostly happens that you show them on the flannel board what is going on and the next time you ask them what you were talking about, they can hardly remember. They say something about Joseph Smith and it's to that extent only that they can remember. The reason is that the visual aid was made too easy to just read it off again.

Author: What material did you use?
Barsch: I made a little book which had no writings in it, except Bible references really small, at the bottom for my own reference. It just had pictures from artists which I would accept and which helped me, such as El Greco, Rembrandt and also modern artists like Rouault and . . . . I used them, when I saw that people had a hard time understanding what I was saying. I just used one or two pictures which helped to a certain degree to open their mind, but not really for remembrance. I used the Joseph Smith painting by Gittens¹¹ too; I think that's quite all right as a portrait painting.

Author: Did you also advise other missionaries to do the same?

Barsch: Yes, first I was district leader and later on regional leader, and I tried to make them understand the things which are impossible to use which could more harm people than help them. Visual aids such as especially Meet the Mormons (one illustration) which quite a lot of missionaries used. I told them that I would not like it if they used them because some of the things in there are not quite the doctrine which we believe in, especially they would not help children because children look at pictures and

¹¹See Appendix 13.
take them for real, and they came up with wrong ideas about the doctrine of the Church.

Author: How did investigators react?

Barsch: A lot of investigators in the beginning observe it a lot when you use the flannel strips and those little pictures, but they feel like they are in Kindergarten . . . . First, you tell them that two and two is four, then you ask them what two and two is and they get upset really easily, especially if you talk to more intelligent people. It is very personal and from person to person you have to select visual aids which you can use in that particular case. I remember once going in San Francisco to the Ambassador from Austria and he had two Greco paintings on the wall, which I had in my little portfolio--but they were originals.

Author: Really originals?

Barsch: Yes, I didn't dare use any of my visual aids and so I just talked with him. There it would have been completely impossible to show him something like a flannel board. He probably would have--even though kind of politely--kicked me out as fast as possible.

Author: Before you joined the Church, how did you react to the missionaries who came to your house?
Barsch: I liked the missionaries, but I sure had problems with the visual aids. I thought if the Church were true it would be completely impossible that they could use art which is so low. When you compare the Catholic Church to the Latter-Day Saints Church, one uses the best they can get and the other uses just scrounged-up material that is really not worth anything and does only harm, especially to children. A grown up person will realize that this is just bad art and it was just done for maybe visual help and will tolerate it, but if it's fed to children, they will take it for real because they have much more faith. They believe that what they see is right. They grow up on these things and will never have the privilege of being able to discern between right and wrong in art because they just grew up on the wrong.

Author: Is it really a matter of right and wrong in art, or is it a matter of good and bad?

Barsch: I believe it's a matter of right and wrong. There is a law to everything and there must be a law to art too.

Author: Do you believe that one should use different levels of art for different people?

Barsch: No, I don't think so, because no one would use
different levels of truth. There is only one truth. There is no gray. You always say the truth. You can tell them all, but you never will tell them all. You feed them first on milk and then on meat, but you always give them the real thing—not to use first bad art to come later on to good art; it never would work this way. It is never to go from worse to better, or from bad to good, or from untrue to true. A missionary would never start telling lies to come up with the truth in the end. He would always tell the truth, but he would be very careful and just give more and more. It's the same thing with art.

Author: Would you call murals in a place like the Visitor's Center on Temple Square visual aids, too?

Barsch: Well, I believe that Visitor's Centers are built for a commercial purpose. They are not built for an edifice or for worship place, but they are only built for the purpose of drawing people to them that they will find out what Mormonism is all about. The commercials and advertisements on billboards on the road were made just to let people who pass by see what we believe. The murals in those Visitor's Centers were done for the same purpose of advertisement.
Author: And information?

Barsch: And information.

Author: Do you feel that any of the paintings or illustrations done for the Church are kitsch?

Barsch: The question would be much easier if you would say, "Do you believe that there is any painting or illustration done for the Church which isn't kitsch?"

Author: Which ones are most kitschy?

Barsch: There are two different things: those which are done in direct order from the Church such as in the Visitor's Center and then those books and other materials which are printed by companies such as Bookcraft and Deseret Books which are not in direct contact with the Church. So there are two categories and I think the ones which are directly printed by the Church are more harmful because they are done under authority. A book which was printed by Bookcraft, I can always excuse, and say this was just a Mormon who printed that and he thought he was doing good. But a Visitor's Center which was erected by the Church should not be excused because this was done with full knowledge for what it will be used. So things in the Visitor's Centers such as The Life of Christ,¹² I think it is on the

¹²Mural by Sidney King.
second floor in the Visitor's Center in Salt Lake City, is probably worthy of being included in any book of good examples of kitsch.

Author:
Are there some that contain just a slight little bit of kitsch?

Barsch:
Yes, for instance there are one or two paintings by Harry Anderson which are really quite all right. For instance *Christ Ordaining His Twelve Apostles*, but he also painted *Isaiah foretelling the Birth of Christ* where above him in the clouds is a picture of Mary and Christ as an infant which is superb kitsch. I mean it could win the first prize in an exhibition of kitsch.

Author:
Where have you seen particularly American good taste?

Barsch:
That's a really hard question. There is good taste but let me explain it on Mormonism. There is for instance, one Mormon painter who I believe is excellent and who could be used a great deal in commercialism and business in the Church. C. C. A. Christensen, I think, is a man who has painterly qualities, even if he is very naive, but this is good. It has absolutely

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13 See Appendix 3.
14 See Appendix 4.
nothing to do with kitsch. There is good taste in America only it's not often found among the great majority of the people. I think the majority was ruined through a lot of influences and never really was taught about things which are good and things which are bad. So the easiest, the most comfortable and the kitschiest were accepted the fastest and the most. There are a lot of good works of modern art. There are absolutely good quality painters like Pollock or Tobey; Francis or Andy Warhol are great artists, they contributed much to the world history in art.

Author: Is that of a kind the Church could lean on to improve the Church advertisement?

Barsch: I think it would be difficult to use a Jackson Pollock for Church advertising. Politicians are used to raise the Church standards in public or for firesides to indicate that they are people who achieved great fame in some other field, so why not in the different fields of art used in the right way. In direct commercial ways it is not possible to use a painting from Tobey or from Andy Warhol, but I think someone like Rouault could be used very efficiently.

Author: Which reasons can you think of why a Church should be advertised?
Barsch: The Church should be advertised. I think the question, maybe, is formulated a little wrong. I believe that the Gospel should be advertised as it is a commandment, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . " etc. I firmly believe in the missionary work. It is the basis of the Church. If there were no missionary work, there would not exist today the Mormon Church. But the way how it is advertised makes the whole difference.

Author: Do you believe there is lack of integrity in the advertisement for the Church?

Barsch: Oh, definitely! No sincerity, no integrity, and I think a lot is just feeding what the people want instead of feeding them that which is right.

Author: Would it be more ideal without advertisement?

Barsch: No, because I think at all times something you could call a visual aid was used. Christ referred often to things people could remember and understand, like to fishermen he talked about fishing, and to farmers he talked about the seed which falls into different kinds of ground, and they visualized that in their mind. When Paul was in Athens he used that altar and went from a visual aid into details, so I would say this is the right thing. When
God gives revelations, he mostly does it on a visual basis like through dreams or appearances to really impress it upon one's mind.

Author: Are there any Mormon Temples that you don't hold as good architecture?

Barsch: I believe some of the older ones, St. George, Manti, Logan and to a certain degree Salt Lake are temples done with much integrity and much honest faith of simple people. You can see it. The building becomes a statement of someone who loved it, who really cared about it, and I accept those temples very much, but the temples which are going to be built, for instance in Washington, D. C., where a modernized copy of the Salt Lake Temple is made, are absolutely out of the question. Not that I want to say something against such temples as ordinance places, but the architectural design, I think, is really out of place. It is just very, very bad; it is similar to what a man like Adolf Hitler did to create a pseudo culture. He copied Greek temples and used them for his government buildings and political influences. It is the same thing. The Greek temple is beautiful because it was built in the time of the Greeks, and I think if someone uses it to build a government building, it's just completely out
of place. The Salt Lake Temple, for instance, had its purpose in its time, but to make a copy of it, a very bad copy in the modern time, is just--very poor.

Author: Have you seen any good architecture in the Church?

Barsch: Yes, for instance, the Tabernacle is very nice architecture, and the Manti Temple with its beautifully handcrafted stair cases, and there are some buildings which I would consider good architecture today. Such as the Olympus Ward in Salt Lake City, which I think is nice architecture on the outside, and maybe the Bay Ward in San Francisco.

Author: Have you seen kitsch in any of the insides of Mormon Temples?

Barsch: Yes, I remember the second time I went to a temple; it was in Logan. On the windows inside there were plastic flowers, plastic flower pots.

Author: Also in painting?

Barsch: The only temples I saw with paintings on the inside were Logan, Manti, and Salt Lake City. I think most of the paintings in these were done by very honest and very faithful people, and you could say they are primitive paintings with religious conviction which I would say are
acceptable. I saw paintings . . . from the Los Angeles Temple, but I really don't want to make a statement about them because I never saw them in the original.

Author: You explained that kitsch is bad and therefore wrong. Do you believe then that kitsch is always harmful?

Barsch: Yes. The real hard core kitsch is not as dangerous as that which is just a little bit kitschy, because people can recognize it as such, but they tend to tolerate that which is slightly kitschy and are unaware of it. They accept more and more. If you give the devil the little finger he takes the whole hand.

Author: Which people do you think are most receptive to kitsch?

Barsch: I think it is those who are not educated at all in art because they mostly accept it from other people. Someone tells them something a little bit authoritative and they will accept it. The great majority of the members of the Church are people who will take all the Church kitsch as good art because it comes from the Church, and people who are in higher positions in the Church are believed to know all about everything and so it is taken for granted. I think its a lack of being educated in the arts to recognize
what's right and what's wrong on the side of the Apostles.

Author: Do you think that a person very educated in other fields, and not particularly in art, could find it easier to determine what is kitsch and what is art?

Barsch: No, I don't believe that someone could be really educated in any kind of field and not be educated in art. There are a lot of people who know a lot about a certain field, but I think they are pseudo educated. I know of a man for instance, who believes that he is very educated in music, always is a great sponsor of music, spends all his energy on that and thinks this gives him automatically the right to appear as a great connoisseur of art, but I think he does not know any of the fields very much. All the arts go together as all the education goes together. They have one ultimate goal. You can't really separate them like music from painting or painting from religion, per se. It will always only be a half education and those people who are half educated are probably the greatest danger of all to uneducated people, when they say with authority something they don't know.

Author: Where have you found most of this half education?
Barsch: I don't want to give a direct answer, but I think a good answer was given from the Lord to Joseph Smith when He said, "Give a man a little authority and he will misuse it and think he knows all." It often happens, especially in the Church, that someone who didn't have any background at all . . . starts to learn a little bit and, soon, even though he knows just a little bit, believes that he knows everything, and acts like an authority. This is the danger, the good solid background is missing too often here in America because high schools and also colleges don't teach the sound background as they should.

Author: Do you believe that what Einstein mentioned that the more you know the more you realize that you don't know anything is true in every field?

Barsch: Yes, most certainly.

Interview Number Four
Interview held between Roland Siegrist, visiting Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Utah, and the author, Salt Lake City, June, 1971.

Author: As a non-member, how does the art in the LDS Church affect you?
Siegrist: It doesn't affect me as a serious message. It affects me like a bad book for children.

Author: How many of the works of artists who work for the Church are kitsch from what you have seen?

Siegrist: I did not see any work done for the Church—that does not mean it doesn't exist—that was not kitsch, but I saw works from Church members that were not kitsch. The best paintings—I am not sure if commissioned by the Church or not—I think were done by C. C. A. Christensen. I saw the exhibition in New York and later here. They are naive, we cannot classify them as kitsch. They are naive with a certain craftsmanship. I wouldn't classify them under naive art with Henry Rousseau or Grandma Moses. The painter had a certain knowledge of painting but naive in content maybe.

Author: Did you see the painting showing Christ ordaining the Twelve Apostles by Harry Anderson?

Siegrist: Yes, that's a perfect example of kitsch. It is misunderstood in content and medium.

Author: Would you say this is a painting or rather an illustration?

Siegrist: I would say it's a painting, it's illustrative though. It lacks tension, is sweet, misleading; it is not symbolic, it is naturalistic and realistic in form. It's absolutely unrealistic
in content, and, of course, it is imitative. A painter today should do something you can only do in paintings, not something you can do better with photography. The purpose of this painting is too obvious; you see immediately what the painter wanted to achieve, which is a very typical characteristic of kitsch. In a very easy way, he appeals to certain emotions. Bach also appeals to emotions, but there is a side-product more than the main purpose of his music. Bach was a professional; his concern was music and everything else you get out of it is additional.

Author: Is there any harmless kitsch according to your opinion?

Siegrist: No, the kitsch that seems harmless at the same time is very harmful. It communicates the wrong things. It is a misuse of all kinds of values in Churches, politics, arts and so on. I would say its not only harmful, because somebody gets the wrong information--art is the most difficult, but also the most perfect way to communicate--it's certainly better than the IBM computer--but it replaces and misplaces. It is as if you get a meal of just substitutes, like Wonder Bread, where everything is taken out, all the flavor and the rest is artificial.
You don't get the nourishment you just get the substitutes. You are dying of hunger even though you are eating all the bread you can. When the wrong things are communicated it is exactly like having a wrong sign on the street. For example, four green lights at an intersection, that's what happened with kitsch; it misleads, it leads to accidents.

Author: Do you find exactly the same kind of kitsch in other churches, or is there a difference?

Siegrist: There is a difference though I don't know if its an essential one. The kitsch here has a typically American flavor. It's the Madison Avenue style of advertisement. The Catholic Church produce the more effective kind of kitsch. Here it is for me not as effective--I saw worse examples in Europe.

Author: In which way do you mean worse?

Siegrist: In a way of concentration. Here the kitsch is diluted, but if you go to Lourdes in France or similar places you find kitsch that almost works miracles.

Author: Which people do you think are most receptive to kitsch?

Siegrist: The uneducated people. You can know how to write and read, learn certain skills, drive a car, read magazines and buy and sell things,
but that doesn't mean you are educated. Education means training of the man as a whole, not just partially, not just technical skill, training of his inner life.

Author: Would you hold it possible that overly practical-minded Americans tend to choose super sweet artistic material out of an urge to escape an extremely insipid, dry atmosphere.

Siegrist: Yes, I would say that.

Author: Where have you found particularly American good taste most of all?

Siegrist: I would say most of all you find that back East in New York and Chicago. American art is strangely very limited, but, on the other hand, it's very strong. It has influenced the European art very much, especially in the last ten to fifteen years. That is contradictory and hard to understand that the country with the greatest amount of kitsch, and the most questionable way of life, produces also very, very strong examples of art and literature and so on. It's a conflict that is hard to explain.

Author: Do you believe the Church in its advertisement could lean on this strong art movement for improvement?

Siegrist: Yes, but even the State of Utah needs promotion in the arts. Salt Lake City with 500,000
inhabitants has an art museum which has a very poor collection, very small. It receives an annual operating budget of, I think, around $20,000 per year, while they should have two million dollars and it could be easily raised in a city like that. For $20,000 you can't buy any paintings. You can buy some drawings, that's all.

Author: Have you seen any Mormon temples or other architecture that were kitsch?

Siegrist: I didn't see many, but would consider all of those I saw as kitsch. I saw a new Visitor's Center in the news on television (in Independence, Missouri) and I think it is not getting better, but worse. Some of the old temples and buildings are very nice. I recall Coalville, where there was a controversy this Spring, and they wanted to break down an old Church building in pioneer style. That Church was part of the community, people had an inner relation to it. It was their building, and if you tear down a building like that, you don't just break down the building, you are tearing down more than that. I saw plans for the new building they want to build there, which are again an example of kitsch.
Author: Do you believe what Einstein mentioned that the more you know the more you realize that you don't know anything is true in every field?

Siegrist: Yes.

Author: Do you believe that the Church members could be educated to recognize kitsch?

Siegrist: Yes. It's a possibility. What I think is necessary is a very good art school. How much you can really educate depends very much on the individual though.

Author: Have you seen any of the films made for the Church?

Siegrist: Yes, I saw one in the Visitor's Center. It is kitsch as well as the paintings. It's rather a strange feeling, I mean, I wouldn't become a member of the Church because of the film.

Author: Would you say that a kitsch film rather chases an investigator away than gets his attention?

Siegrist: I think it appeals to selected groups. To me, it is a wrong basis to get members, based on advertisement like film, painted material, radio, TV or any other form. I think you are getting the wrong members, or, better, you have the wrong basis to get members of a Church. I believe you are turning away certain people you should also have in the Church. You are appealing to a certain character of people, so
you are getting a selected membership. When you are looking at films in the Visitor's Center and at the other material you feel you are getting forced into something in a way you can hardly escape. Some peasant or somebody uneducated gets forced into something by emotions; maybe he shouldn't be forced, but motivated in another way. Again, I think of Bach. He did not force people, the motivation wasn't emotion. It was music that tells about emotions, about problems. Magdalena's tears in the Passion of St. Mathew are not the solving of the problem, they are talking about the problem. That is what I feel is missing in the Church Visitor's Center. It is misleading.

**Interview Number Five**

Interview held between Ed Maryon, Dean and Professor of Art at the University of Utah, and the author, Salt Lake City, June, 1971.

Author: Do you feel that any of the work of the artists who work for the Church is kitsch?

Maryon: When you say any of the work, I'd say yes, because some of our art is very poor quality. It isn't kitsch in the sense that it is intended to have sales appeal, but it lacks professional quality. However, much of the art currently in
use by the Church is highly professional and, consequently, couldn't be called kitsch. But it still may be inappropriate or less than ideal for its purposes. Much of our art— including the highly professional work—lacks a "fine art" religious quality. Stan Galli, Ken Riley, John Faliter, etc., have done outstanding "illustrations" for the Church, but there is a level above that which we should seek.

Author: What in your estimation is harmful kitsch and what is harmless kitsch?

Maryon: I think that any kind of art work used for religious purposes should be elevating, both in content and formal qualities. What concerns me most about our poor art is that it likely turns away some people who are artistically discriminating and sensitive. The validity of the gospel message is no doubt related to "validity" of the "artistic" message in the minds of some people.

Author: Which people do you think are most receptive to kitsch?

Maryon: I believe it would be difficult to isolate any specific group of people. The public in general does not have a high level of artistic judgment.

Author: How would you define the public?
Maryon: Any cross-section. Among the more educated people you will find unevenness in aesthetic judgment.

Author: What would be the reason?

Maryon: Primarily, a lack of study or exposure to fine things. Taste isn't easily acquired by the majority of people. Most people simply lack the opportunity to study art sufficiently to become connoisseurs.

Author: Of how great importance do you find visual aids to teach people? I am not only talking about the visual aids the missionaries are using, but also the paintings in the Visitor's Center.

Maryon: Assuming the teacher is fully qualified, and the student wants to learn, the key aspect in teaching is a responsive communication between the teacher and student. In an ideal situation, visual aids seem almost superfluous to me. As this situation is less ideal, visual aids play an increasingly important role—holding attention of the student and assisting the teacher. Thinking again of the "public" as the student, effective visual aids seem very needful.

Author: Where have you found particularly American good taste most of all?
Maryon: I suspect the larger urban cities hold an advantage. The availability of fine art in these centers has an obvious effect on the growth of appreciation. However, there are individuals everywhere who acquire a high level of discrimination on their own.

Author: Which would you say is the cultural center of the United States right now?

Maryon: New York. I don't feel the quality of the best things produced there is necessarily better than other cities, but the concentration makes it the center.

Author: Is it a kind the Church could lean on to improve the Church advertisement?

Maryon: Something done in good taste can reach all levels of the public. There is a notion that fine art cannot reach the common person--and some art would not--but appropriate, great art can reach people at all levels.

Author: Are there any Mormon temples that you don't hold as good architecture?

Maryon: I feel the most recent temples are the least effective from an architectural viewpoint. The older Utah temples are likely the finest we have in this regard.

Author: Do you believe what Einstein mentioned that the more you know the more you realize that you
don't know anything is true in every field?

Maryon: Yes, I think that is true. The more our scope of study widens, the more we realize there is to be learned.

Author: Do you believe that the Church members could be educated to recognize kitsch?

Maryon: I believe they could be educated as well as any group could—maybe better—but I think it's unrealistic to think that the Church should assume this teaching responsibility. No doubt our auxiliary programs could assist more, but this teaching seems outside the basic role of gospel education.

Author: Have you seen any films made for the Church that contain kitsch?

Maryon: I don't feel any of our films have reached "greatness," but in general, they seem to me to be very professional and, consequently, beyond a kitsch designation.

Author: (Forgive me this somewhat prejudiced question.) Do you believe a kitschless movie that still presents the message of the Mormon doctrine could be made?

Maryon: A great film could have an important message although it may not be as obviously didactic as ours typically are. I feel there is great opportunity for personal expression and other
subtle themes that could be very meaningful to our members.

Interview Number Six

Interview between Hugh Nibley, Professor of History and Religion at the Brigham Young University, and the author.

Author: Do you feel that any of the work of the artists who work for the Church is kitsch?

Nibley: Any of it? Of course, a lot of it is. Most of it is; of the ones that are working for the Church!

Author: What in your estimation is harmful kitsch and what is harmless kitsch?

Nibley: I don't think there is any harmless kitsch. It's all harmful.

Author: Which people, do you think, are most receptive to kitsch?

Nibley: I would say from experience, the business community.

Author: Would you hold it possible that overly practical-minded Americans tend to choose super sweet artistic material (like souvenirs, decoration for decoration's sake) out of an urge to escape an extremely insipid dry atmosphere?

Nibley: It's not a matter of escape. No, I don't think that's the reason. I don't think there is a conscious urge to escape. I think they are
doing it to confirm their values rather than to escape from them. It's almost a defiant gesture.

**Author:** Of how great importance do you find visual aids to teach people?

**Nibley:** Well, the blackboard is the best visual aid. The other stuff is more or less of a hindrance because it's sort of paralyzing to the mind and blows you to sleep.

**Author:** How do you feel about visual aids used by the missionaries of the Church?

**Nibley:** I haven't seen too much of them in action, but I know lots of people are offended by them because they talk down to the people. They are patronizing, condescending; everybody doesn't like to be treated like six year olds and they do that.

**Author:** Where have you found particularly American good taste?

**Nibley:** I think among some of our artists at BYU, there is some very good taste. Right here.

**Author:** Is it a kind the Church could lean on to improve the Church advertisement?

**Nibley:** Not directly, though they could lean on it indirectly. I mean if an artist is recognized, is producing great works, that's all we need. Just an identification with the Church. But as
far as actually depicting either doctrines or concepts or events in the Church history, that is very risky business, as it is in literature, as it is in music. Very risky.

Author: Are there any Mormon temples that have aspects of being kitsch from the architectural point of view?

Nibley: Yes. They all have contained some since the time they were built. Of course, some of them are in better taste than others. The last three are the worst. Some of them at the time they were built were certainly not kitsch because we have the contemporary description of the architecture, say, the Nauvoo Temple in which there were features found nowhere else, and this I have heard architects say, that the Salt Lake Temple is like nothing in heaven or on earth in spite of its many Victorian features and adornments. But they are strictly non-representative. It is this representative art that is kitsch.

Author: It seems most important in temple and church buildings now to show off like in the the Provo Temple.

Nibley: I wouldn't even call it a temple. Strictly speaking, it isn't a temple, just like sprinkling is not baptism, because it's not squared to the
compass. It frankly looks like a bank.

Author: What do you think about the Oakland Temple?
Nibley: Well, I don't mind that one. It has a tremendous honest symbolism, more than the architects were aware of. Terrific, especially from the outside, everything about it. It is almost a perfect representation of the temple concept.

Author: Do you believe what Einstein mentioned that the more you know the more you realize you don't know anything is true in every field?
Nibley: Yes, that's true in every field.

Author: Do you believe that the Church members could be educated to recognize kitsch?
Nibley: Oh yes, they could. My brother, Reed, has had some very good results in lectures during the BYU Education Weeks. People are very alert, very quick to recognize kitsch as soon as it is pointed out to them, what it is.

Author: Would you connect kitsch with a life style Isaiah has prophesied of concerning the last days that people will want to hear all nice sweet and smooth things and refuse to see all the problems that are there, growing over their heads?

Nibley: Yes, that's definitely true. The Norman Rockwell syndrome is one example, and you could find some others too, Brigham Young has a lot
to say about this, also Joseph Smith. He said
that the effect of the Gospel on normal people
is that it is frightening and offensive, and
they don't want to look at it that way. No,
they like the sweet, easy stuff. They like
the sugar.

Interview Number Seven

Interview held between Conan E. Mathews, Professor
of Art at the Brigham Young University, and the author,
Provo, July 1971.

Author: Would you say that any of the work of the
artists who work for the Church is kitsch?
Mathews: Yes, I am sure many of them are.
Author: How do you feel about Arnold Friberg's
paintings?
Mathews: I feel they are strictly in the illustrational
class, they are without an awareness or
consciousness of the great artistic composi-
tional or aesthetic sense, but I think they
are good arrangements and the draftsmanship
is fairly good; but I don't think they go
beyond storytelling, didactic illustration.
I wouldn't classify them as kitsch, however,
because I think he is sincere and his work
is sincere and purposeful enough for what it is.
But it isn't art. It is storytelling pictures
that are well done.
Author: Have you seen work by Robert Skemp?15

Mathews: Yes. I can't see anything more in it than a sentimental kind of superficial, romantic and didactic illustration and almost a photographic craftsmanship with the brush I would say.

Author: Do you find that Harry Anderson's work contains any kitsch?

Mathews: Paintings that I have seen by Harry Anderson are structurally strong; there is a solidity, a solid draftsmanship together with a dark and light handling that do create a good and convincing three dimensionality. I can't see anything wrong with that. I would say "Christ ordaining his Apostles"16 is one of the better pieces I have seen in contemporary Church art. It still is a didactic art; it isn't creative for aesthetic purposes. But I don't object to the Church on that. If that's their purpose, their declared priority, and is what they need at this time and if they get the best artists that they can to do this kind of work. It's a little bit like this with Friberg--I don't object to it--he is forthright about what he is trying to do and the Church is forthright about what it wants. All I say is that it isn't great

15See Appendices 6, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

16See Appendix 3.
art in the ultimate sense. But there may be someday when the Church will feel a need for it. When the work with the teaching emphasis, the missionary and conversion emphasis is done we may see some mature art.

Author: Would you call the paintings in the Visitor's Center in Salt Lake City illustrations?

Mathews: Yes, even the big monumental sculpture of Christ, it's big but it isn't organically aesthetic, it's just a big man—it has no symbolism, no formal or aesthetic values, but it's what they want for this period.

Author: Is there any harmless kitsch?

Mathews: If kitsch includes a certain spontaneity and undisciplined emotional overflow, I would say there is some virtue in it; like often expressed in spontaneous dance. Many of the paintings of John Marin I think are great paintings, but some people would call them kitsch because they were apparently done carelessly, hastily, and spontaneously.

Author: Why do you think there is so much kitsch in the Church?

Mathews: Because I think the Church hasn't come to a mature point of view on art and the use of aesthetics. I think the Church is a little bit afraid of the art or music that has purely
aesthetic values because historically it has been proved that many people have substituted the aesthetic experience with religious experience. As the Old Testament teaches, we have somewhat taken this point of view: no great music or no great art is creative for purely aesthetic purposes because we may misinterpret these for religious experience and forget to go to Church . . .

Author: Where have you found good taste most of all in the United States?

Mathews: I think it literally happens here and there in no particular locality.

Author: Do you find concentrations in certain places?

Mathews: No, I can't say that because it seems to me there is about an equal good and bad, no matter where you go.

Author: Do you believe that the Church could lean on Modern Art to improve the Church advertisement?

Mathews: Yes, I do and I believe they are making steps in that direction. I think the format of some of the Church publications is better today than it was fifteen or twenty years ago. I don't think it's getting worse, I think it's getting better. And I think it will continue to as the Church matures and becomes more world wide and picks up more culture. I am pleased with what
has been done with the Hawaiian culture; the Hawaiians have received latitude to keep their primitive arts and bring them into the Church. When this will be done with other cultures, I think it has been to some extent, it will deepen and help mature the Church art. In other words, we are less provincial now than we were twenty-five years ago.

Author: Have you seen good architecture in the Church?

Mathews: Yes, I would say so, but there is no such thing as Mormon architecture or Mormon art. There isn't any more Mormon art than there is Mormon chemistry. There are artists who use Mormon subjects, Mormon themes, but this doesn't make Mormon art. I think there is some good architecture, we have been eclectic, but as long as we have the thirteenth article of our faith we have to be eclectic. That is, anything that is good and beautiful from wherever it comes we should be willing to use and adopt. I don't see anything original about architecture in the Church, maybe with one exception and that is the Tabernacle; none of the temples are. The Mormon culture is very young, we are still floundering and gathering up this and utilizing that. The Tabernacle is certainly a unique and ingenious structure for people of the Church to have built
when they did that.

Author: Do you believe a kitschless movie that still presents the message present in the Mormon doctrine could be made?

Mathews: Yes, I am sure it could. There is still lots of material in the Mormon culture for artistic, written, musical or dramatical production that is yet to be done. I think it will be genuine and significant sometime.

Author: Do you believe what Einstein mentioned that the more you know the more you realize that you don't know anything is true in every field?

Mathews: Yes, I would have to agree with that.

Author: Do you think that the Church members could be educated to recognize kitsch?

Mathews: No, because people don't live long enough. I have tried what I consider most of my lifetime, and, in one place I lived, I had people available for fifteen years. I spoke at clubs, I did everything in my power, I convinced a few young people, students, but for the most part every generation has to learn this over again. Most people don't live long enough and by that I mean ninety percent of the people you try to educate don't really become educated.

Author: You don't leave much hope.
Mathews: There is the hope for the ten percent. I think this is why the ten percent is mentioned in the Bible. If you can convince ten percent you got a pretty good percentage, that's all you can hope for. So 90 percent will always be susceptible and give away to kitsch or bad taste.

Author: Would you connect kitsch with a life style Isaiah has prophesied of concerning the last days--people will want to hear all nice sweet and smooth things and refuse to see all the problems that are there growing over their heads?

Mathews: Yes, I think so; the biblical conception of time and the earthly development is true. If these are the last days, and from many points of view they would appear to be, there is a truism in the Bible, in the book by Sorokin *The Crisis of Our Age*, and in much of what our philosophers and religious prophets today are saying and thinking. We are in a stage of sensationalism, radical and revolutionary ideologies that is different than any period the world has ever experienced due to the high development of technology, television, radio and the change in concepts of time and space. There

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is bound to be more bad taste and ultimately, some kind of breakdown is inevitable. That soft and sweet and sentimental side together with violence is a breaking away from the middle of the road, going both directions into extremes. We seem to find ourselves either too far right or too far left instead of this middle of the road. I see a great role for the Church or for the teachings of Christ. I really think that most of what Christ said is more pertinent today than in the day when He was saying it.

Author: Lots of young people realize that; there is a new Christ cult now.

Mathews: Right, now they should come to a middle of the road instead of going off to the other side in kind of a sentimental sweet and soft way which becomes the complete opposite of the violence and revolutionary and is too conforming, that is, without creativity and vitality. I think there is a middle of the road that is truly Christ, not the one side or the other.
CHAPTER IV

REASONS FOR AND REASONS AGAINST KITSCH

Are There Reasons for Kitsch?

Introduction

The judgement of art is obviously subjective; a number of art critics might agree in certain cases, but seldom is the agreement unanimous. The great quantity of evaluations written about Pablo Picasso's or Salvador Dali's work would be a good example. Even less agreement is present in evaluations of kitsch. Dictionaries and encyclopaedias draw a rather broad picture though it is somewhat narrowed down when we consult only authors who are experts and wrote essays on the particular subject. Gert Richter is an emphatic defender of kitsch. He feels that "we need kitsch," and gives a number of reasons:

Kitsch cannot be exterminated. And I don't even believe one should exterminate it. There is a certain need for kitsch, namely in all of us, which to me seems to be of vital importance, a longing for the delights of sentimentality .... It satisfies our naive need for feeling, which is not contented by the insipid weekday, for glory, for balanced justice, for happiness, for all refu llment which our fate


denies us it creates examples, give the illusions, the dreams, which we need.\textsuperscript{3}

Therefore, I think that kitsch is an innate phenomenon that cannot be exterminated; one cannot prohibit the human frailties because it is harmless, it is more work to be ridiculed than to be taught.\textsuperscript{4}

Gert Richter sees kitsch as

\ldots the yearning expression of a desired world--it represents the ideal world \ldots as people who are absolutely educated in taste are dreaming of--a world without problems, without ugliness, without hunger, without injustice, or at least a world where distress resolves, because goodness gains victory. \ldots \textsuperscript{5}

kitsch is an artistic weakness, \ldots it can only be recognized on a certain level of education at all. One who doesn't have an organ for art, consequently cannot recognize kitsch. Recognition of kitsch presupposes possibilities to compare and along with that also the ability to criticize.\textsuperscript{6}

Contrary to the interpretation of all other authors consulted for this thesis, Gert Richter finds fault in kitsch, in its artistic lack or weakness rather than in its falsehood:

Because of this mendacity essentially it is condemned--not even so much because of its artistic defectiveness. I would say though that this artistic lack is the more severe deficit of kitsch.\textsuperscript{7}

When it comes to religious kitsch though, he seems to have some doubts about the harmlessness of kitsch.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{4}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{5}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{6}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{7}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 9.
... darling sweetly little Jesuses, touching paintings of Madonnas and pink-red wax hearts, figures of saints with mass produced faces, silver crutches as thanksgivings for a miraculous healing or similar things—all this is certainly horrible and kitschy enough. But is it not more than just comical? There is a kind of "marzipantheologie" [sugar-coated theology] expressed in these things: just as sweet and awfully darling will people with a simple mind imagine the Christian world of faith. The Christian faith receives a quite fatal flavour of saccharine

The author finds the assertion, that "there is a certain need of kitsch, namely in all of us ... a longing for the joys of sentimentality" was seen from a completely wrong angle. If we need kitsch, if we need sentimentality, something is wrong with us. Be it the lack of opportunity to develop our taste, to develop an understanding for the true and false, or be it our assessment. Kitsch will never truly satisfy "our need for feeling, for glory, for unbalanced justice, for happiness ... fulfillment" as little as a lie will satisfy our desire for true knowledge.

Can a little plastic flower in the home be excused as harmless? It definitely cannot. It clearly shows the characteristics of kitsch: it is false, and misleading. It is an imitative flower. It doesn't have the attributes of a real flower; it doesn't have a smell, it doesn't grow, it doesn't wilt, it is dead. It was not made to beautify because it isn't beautiful, it may have a pseudo beauty as long as it is believed to be a real flower, but is frustrating when discovered to be an imitation. It was made to

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8Ibid., p. 193.
substitute the untrue for the true. It was manufactured only because it sells. It doesn't fill a need of man; it is solely a money-making object, and therefore hollow and negative.

If we can prove that even a little plastic flower is harmful kitsch, falsifying the true natural creation of God, how can we find virtue in any other form of kitsch? Many forms might be recognized easily and ridiculed by the majority, but taken for real by the person who is lacking the necessary education. No doubt there is something very human in kitsch, but can it therefore be tolerated? No, there is no reason to tolerate kitsch as well as there is no reason to tolerate a lie. Inasmuch as we don't want to lie, and don't want to believe a lie, we should not produce kitsch and not allow ourselves to like it.

It cannot be decided here how many people who are well educated are submissive to kitsch, but it must be said, that an educated person who likes kitch, musical, visual or any kind, is not completely educated. And if these kind of people are dreaming of "the ideal world" they will never find it in the realm of kitsch; they will have to go to more sincere fields like art, philosophy, religion and science—even those will only serve as bridges, not as ideals in themselves.
Brigham Young was talking about training "the whole man" in all the arts and sciences, in the history of the world, in the laws of how to be useful while we live." And Joyce Cary said: "Art is a creation of meanings for the senses and the sensibility, the whole man."

It is really a matter of how much of a well-rounded education we have, and also how receptive we are for truth to be able to tell what is kitsch or not.

Cary also said:

Without education it is not possible for a man even to appreciate any art. For education does not give only knowledge but taste; it qualifies the feelings as well as the judgment. It creates the sensibility which is a compound of feelings and judgment—the depth of a man's sensibility, the sureness of his judgment, will be in proportion with the thoroughness of his education. And the education must in the first place be factual. I am speaking from experience.

Reasons Against Kitsch

"To be sentimental is about the worst thing you can be, especially in the arts."

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9Hugh Nibley, "Educating the Saints--A Brigham Young Mosaic," Brigham Young University Studies, p. 73.

10Ibid., p. 83.


12Ibid., p. 38.

This statement was made by John Canaday, a well known art critic in New York. Since Freud we know how much can proliferate below the surface, unrecognized, and, therefore, uncontrolled, and understand much easier why sentimentality can be so negative. Here is what Richard Egenter said concerning sentimentality:

There is no doubt that sentimentality runs riot in the realm of kitsch. Nevertheless kitsch and sentimentality are not the same thing. Not all kitsch is sentimental; sometimes it is so inept and insipid that it does not even express anything as positive as sentimentality. And again, there is kitsch which is not sentimental, but rational, which titillates reason instead of sense and feeling: it can be called allegorical, sort of bogus symbolic art where there is no real connection between the idea and the form . . . . Nor is everything sentimental kitsch. There are experiences which are internal only, without visible expression; or the outward form may make no claim to artistic status (as so easily happens in the case of that sentimentality which is disastrous to moral and religious life.14

The picture "The Purpose of Life" by Robert Skemp in the Visitor's Center in Salt Lake City is a standard example of this particular kind of sentimentality; it is depicting every little detail, smooth and pretty, and the persons posing ready for the television camera, a sugar-coated world. Another description by Egenter fits surprisingly well:

We may say that when kitsch is present either in a work of art, or in the response to a work of art, it is then a question not of something which has intrinsic value, but of something with immediate

appeal to the viewer: not of something real in itself, won with arduous effort, but of something superficial, usually appealing merely to the senses and lacking any symbolic life, because the form does not embody any value content: not of something personal and unique, but of the comfortable cliché and the easiest formula to hand; not of a response on the part of the viewer to the significance of the artist's creation, but a short-cut made without regard or respect for the former—a short-cut probably aimed simply at the maximum gratification for the minimum effort, but which can also be aimed at using the work for ulterior, inferior ends—for instance, for the sensation of religious uplift: not of giving a true form to the inner-image but of dexterous hands or a fluent tongue finding a quick way to get an effect—using therefore blatant, crude and noisy means of expression.15

He continues quoting Dietrich von Hildebrand:

There are people who are pleased with the trivial, sentimental, sweetly tasteless, cheaply effective, sensational and who look for these qualities in art. The noble and profound quality of true art, which avoids all cheap effects, does not appeal to them and is not able to arouse their enthusiasm . . . It is not merely that they look for something in art which does not belong to art but to another sphere of life, but that they look for qualities which are negative and perverted also in life.16

There is always an irrelevance in kitsch either in the work or in the beholder, it might claim to be pious though it lacks thought and piety. The statement by Brigham Young "... the great masses of people neither think or act for themselves ...").17 might give some support.

15 Ibid., p. 54.
16 Ibid., p. 84.
If someone finds relaxation in kitsch, and does not care to think about it or control it, it will begin to affect and etch into his whole life. One might say a kitsch-man is someone who has become an addict of kitsch—no one was ever born as a kitsch-man. This addiction has taken over unconsciously, as if someone regularly mixes drugs into our drink. Daniel J. Boorstin touches this point in his book *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream*.

When actors become "entertainers," drama is only entertainment, and music too is "entertainment." We all want "mood music." In the actual titles of a new record series: "Music to Relax By," "Music to Dine By," "Music for Lovers," "Music to Read By," etc., etc. There has grown up a flourishing business which pipes music into offices, factories, and public places. Music has taken its place somewhere between engineering and interior decoration; alongside air conditioning, sound-proof ceilings, indirect lighting and contour chairs.18

The lost feeling for taste and the overall conflict of values is the tragedy of our time: A Shakespearean Drama on television and a commonplace commercial breaking it off right in the middle, or a symphony by Rachmaninoff on the radio and the station identification in the end, without a second's pause. With no identification of the music at all and a trite, superficial song right afterwards interrupted by a voice: "Bob, I'm going shopping, what would you like to eat . . ." What an insensitivity is necessary to arrange such programs!

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Are women in America who are walking on the street with a head full of curlers a sign of a new culture? It might seem a small cause, but it creates the same impression of lost feeling for value and taste.

The technical age has made mass production possible; the appreciation for originality and individuality has been paralyzed and partially exterminated by it—"Technology . . . the knack of so arranging the world that we don't have to experience it," as stated by Max Frisch.\(^{19}\) It has also produced a mass culture and in it values were changed like "traveler to tourist . . . ideal to image . . . shape to shadow . . . "\(^{20}\) and more. Its development began in America and from there is spreading all over the world, infiltrating the nations, those much aware of it as well as the primitive and helpless ones, impetuously. The comforts of technology have been used thoughtlessly; the car has been invented, but before it was fully developed with filters that would take care of the exhaust gases it was put to use thoughtlessly and has become a servant and a curse at the same time. The effort that was so much needed for the development of proper exhaust filtration has been squandered in meaningless, nonfunctional, so-called aerodynamic, designing, emphasizing the outside appearance and has become a typical kitsch phenomenon.

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\(^{19}\) Ibid., title page.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., p. iv.
Mass produced articles are hardly used for any kitschless reason—probably among the only ones are reproductions and photography used in schooling as a pure visual reference aid. Prints from famous painters on bedroom walls, especially expensively framed and with simulated brushstroke structure, are only one example.

From the business world which is holding the strings to most of this disproportion is nothing to be expected that would require restrictions or limitations of the big goal of continuously growing financial gain.

The business world is described by Brigham Young:

Take for instance, the financial circles, the commerce of the world, those businessmen, where they have their opponents they . . . with all the secrecy of the grave, I might say, will seek to carry out their schemes unknown to their opponents, in order that they may win. Like the man at the table with the cards in his hands, unseen by any but himself, he will take advantage as far as he can. So says the politician. So say the world of Christendom, so say the world of the heathens, and it is party upon party, sect after sect, division upon division, and we are all for ourselves.\(^\text{21}\)

If this business power ruling the world is not to be overcome in the Church any more, it should be a clear sign that the Church has become like the world. Nothing worse can happen to a Church founded by Jesus Christ!

That lost feeling for value is also expressed in this confusion, Gillo Dorfles is talking about: "The essence of kitsch is the confusion of the ethical category with the

\(^{21}\text{Hugh Nibley, Educating the Saints, op. cit., p. 81.}\)
aesthetic category; a 'beautiful' work not a 'good' one is the aim . . ."  
With this goal in mind there are no limitations in copying and imitating only what is seen—an abundance presents itself—and dispelling all thought, and what Joyce Cary said: "And there is no such thing as imitation in art. All art involves translation," was forgotten long, long ago.

There exists a combination of businessman and painter today who paints originals right in an art factory on a rotating basis, seven hundred to one thousand are turned out in a week and the frames are made right along with them. Worse than men degrading art in such an obvious way seems to be the professional artist whom the public honors as a "master" as Egenter analyses it.

. . . the habit of kitsch corrupts. In a different category are the works of Dali. These are not cheap and shoddy, but very expensive and very accomplished, and for that reason more insidious; these to my mind are evil kitsch.

Salvador Dali, a highly talented painter seems to produce " . . . in cold blood without the slightest feeling," (the words of Tolstoi) and combine great technique, and this in cold blood.

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22 Gillo Dorfles, Kitsch, op. cit., p. 71.
24 Egenter, The Desecration, op. cit., p. 41.
25 Ibid., p. 154.
bad art and kitsch in some of his works. Representational artists and probably Dali too are reprimanded in this quotation from an essay by Leonard J. Arrington:

And just as Victor Hugo gave his stories verisimilitude by "painting true things by invented personages" as he expressed it, so creative writers by using actual places, persons, laws and circumstance in their narratives, have invested their fictional characters with reality or by an inverse process, have remolded real people and altered real events to provide entertainment and diversion for their readers...

Creative persons can seldom resist the temptation to "assist" nature by fabricating images, symbols, characters and situations. That these are purveyed by publishers as "truth" and accepted by the reading public as "truth," is perhaps inevitable. Again listen to Hugo: "Man has always wished to add something to God's work. Man retouches creation sometimes for better, sometimes for worse."

Painting by Arnold Friberg with those gigantic masses of flesh and muscles fit this description well; they may appeal to many people by common values of physical nature, but not on a spiritual plane. It was Kandinsky who stated in his book On the Spiritual in Art: "That is to be considered beautiful which results from an inner spiritual need, as only that which is spiritual can be beautiful."

Paul Klee said: "Art does not reproduce that which is visible but rather causes something to become visible."

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Josef Albers formulated it: "Art is to make visible the invisible." 30

And David O. McKay, the late President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints said: "... to make the invisible visible, the unseen seen, is the rare endowment of a poet." 31

Wulf Barsch, the person interviewed in Interview Number Three, stated the following:

The Spanish painter El Greco made the invisible visible, he tried a connection between God and man. Friberg simply copied what is on earth, always visible; it pulls down not up—the devil is probably a good looking fellow. 32

David O. McKay also said: "We must not try to paint deity in the Sacred Grove!" 33 Nevertheless, who can count the many pictures produced of this particular subject, God and Jesus Christ appearing to a simple young man.

Kitsch appears to be a "corrupter of the most treasured experiences" 34 of man, like Ludwig Giesz called

30 Josef Albers on a sound track of the film: "To Open Eyes."


32 Stated to the author in a second interview.

33 In a private letter from President Delbert L. Stapley (directed to the Church Information Service Committee), July 8, 1968.

34 Dorfles, Kitsch, op. cit., p. 155.
it. Kitsch should not take the place of art, for if Clive Bell's statement "Art is not only a means of good states of mind but perhaps the most direct and most potent that we possess,"\(^{35}\) is true we would lose too much.

**Conclusion**

After examining the reasons for and against kitsch expressed by different authors it was found that the reasons for a defense of kitsch were without justification. (The author is aware, though, that no final judgement can be made and as "the savior condemned the Pharisees for their excess in religion and the money changers for their excess in the market place."\(^{36}\) There might be facts not discovered yet that indeed find a psychological or other kind of explanation of the phenomenon of kitsch.)


CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

General Outcomings of the Interviews

Interview Number One can be referred to as the most informative. It allows some insight into methods used by the Church for the Visitor's Center.

Interview Number Four represents a look at the arts in the Church from the outside; Mr. Siegrist is from Switzerland and not a member.

All interviews reveal a general concern about the lack of appropriateness concerning the kind of art work that is used by the Church for its publications and places of information.

There is a unanimous agreement that:

1. There are good technical qualities in much of the art work done for the Church.

2. All the art work throughout the Visitor's Centers and elsewhere has an illustrative character.

3. The work is didactic.

4. The techniques are realistic and, in most cases, naturalistic.

5. The Tabernacle in Salt Lake City is an outstanding example of good architecture.

6. The less or uneducated people are most receptive
to kitsch.

7. There is a great necessity for improvement in educating the membership of the Church. (The proposed methods differed greatly. One person felt that the general membership would hardly change opinions once acquired, especially on taste; another person found that ninety percent of the people are not teachable in a lifetime, and the greatest efforts would be necessary to teach at least ten percent.)

The majority agrees that:

1. The art work in the Church is not to be considered as fine art.

2. Much of it is, more or less, kitschy.

3. There is a strong advertising tendency in the informations and publications of the Church.

4. Kitsch is harmful; however, there are doubts about a possible harmless kitsch in some cases.

5. There is a danger to alienate people who are more sensitive and discriminating and thereby to lose a selected membership.

6. There is a way to incorporate elements of Modern Art into the art and publication work of the Church. (Some remarked this would be a difficult task.)

7. There is a tendency in temple design from an eclectic, but honest architecture, towards an overly representative style with the main purpose to impress. (This in two cases was likened to government buildings of
None of the temples were called original in style.

8. Educating "the man as a whole" is emphasized as a necessity for the membership of the Church. Also a lack of general education beginning with high schools and the need for improvement in the quality of schooling altogether with more emphasis on fine art or art appreciation.

9. Visual aids in missionary work and in general are felt not ideal but necessary under the present conditions. Since an illustration in its character serves as a visual aid, the illustrative material in the Visitor's Centers consists basically of visual aids.

On a question not touched in all of the interviews those persons asked agreed: There is a future possibility for good films not containing any kitsch in the Church.

**Summary of the Study**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to define kitsch as a concept and investigate the reasons for its existence in the visual arts and advertisements of the Church.

**Problem**

The problem was to ascertain that there is a presence of kitsch in these arts and advertisements and to determine and analyse the reasons for it.
Research

A research was made by consulting major encyclopaedias and dictionaries and the writings of international experts for the determination and clarification of the term kitsch. Seven interviews were held with persons more or less artistically inclined. Reasons for and against kitsch were considered somewhat thoroughly and a list of the general outcomings of the interviews was made up.

Findings and Conclusion

It was found that, wherever kitsch prevails among the membership of the Church and in general, there is a lack of education of "the man as a whole." Not only the lack of education, though, but also our complete attitude in life and our desire for truth determine whether we are receptive to kitsch or not. It was also found that there is a greater quantity of the more dangerous professional kitsch than of the naive kitsch and that even though the taste of the beholder may be undeveloped or spoiled, it does not mean people have to be fed with what they like, for that would be like preaching to the world of the world instead of God. It was held possible that at least a certain percentage could become more educated concerning art and kitsch.
Recommendations

It is recommended, as a result of this study, that the elements of kitsch in the art work and advertisement done for the Church will be observed more closely, and that all institutions concerned (preferably schools, museums and the auxiliary programs of the Church) will put more emphasis on educating the membership of the Church as well as other people towards a better discrimination between art and kitsch.
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McKay, David O. Private letter from President Delbert L. Stapley (directed to the Church Information Service Committee), July 8, 1968.
APPENDICES
Jesus Christ Testifies of Joseph Smith

"Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments."

*Doctrine and Covenants 1:17*