

Research Article

POP ART, CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND GLOBAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Copyrights have a big importance nowadays. Unfortunately, there are a lot of art activities that practice cultural appropriation and don't respect copyrights. Pop Art is known as one of the 20th century forms of art that allows appropriation without harm done to copyrights. Pop Art strength is its capacity to cross different private and public spaces in order to spread universal messages by re-editing existing pieces of art. In this paper we are going to explain all of these notions by answering the following questions: Is there a difference between appropriation and creativity? Does Pop Art respect copyright? What communication scope does Pop Art have? To answer these questions our results will mainly fill these axes: "Inspiration and appropriation: crime or universal expression?"; "Pop Art: an authorized creative cultural appropriation"; "Pop Art: a meta tool to diverse communication goals". The methodological approach of this paper is based on a qualitative and thematic analysis based on authors' citations from relevant literature. The main goal is to provide answers to formulated research questions. The limits of this paper can be gathered as follows: the current paper can't study all types of arts practicing appropriation; this paper is not devoted to study pieces of art, but to rethink preconceived ideas about pop art and appropriation. This paper can also open up perspectives by studying a large number of Pop Art Products, their messages and the communicative effects they create.

Keywords: Pop art, appropriation, cultural appropriation, copyright, public space, re-editing, communication, crossbreeding.

INTRODUCTION

With the globalization, cultural patrimony goes up to ancestors and spreads through history all over the world. The scope of appropriation has grown rapidly in the last decades. A quick bottom up in modern art forms of the 20th century shows how appropriation touched various art products. In this context, sometimes it is hard to distinguish between appropriation and creativity.

But art plays an important part in sending serious and universal messages to mankind. Art has no limits but it's also bound by laws and copyrights. When the artist is inspired by other pieces of art, regardless of good intentions he might have, appropriation has heavy consequences: it costs the artist his reputation; he might also be involved in a lawsuit. Appropriation also harms the true owner of the art product. The dilemma between appropriation and inspiration takes place in the artistic world.

In this context, modern art forms of the 20th century chose to express their messages by referencing existing pieces of art. In these cases, communication objectives are re-edited by the artist responding to his own goals or to a sponsor's ones. In this paper we emphasize on Pop Art and its relationship with appropriation and copyright. Our study answers the following questions: Is there a difference between appropriation and creativity? Does Pop Art respect copyright? What communication scope does Pop Art have?

A variety of answers might be found. In order to sweep the different tracks, we lay the following hypothesis to answer our research questions:

H1: The 20th century art like Pop Art is based on appropriation and doesn't respect copyrights.

H2: The 20th century art like Pop Art is based on appropriation and respects copyrights.

H3: The 20th century art like Pop Art is based on appropriation and it helps it to communicate to a large public.

To answer all these questions and hypothesis we need to provide solid arguments from the existing literature. To do so, we are going to adopt the following plan:

Methodology

Results

Inspiration and appropriation: crime or universal expression?

Pop Art: an authorized creative cultural appropriation

Pop Art: a meta tool to diverse communication goals

Discussion

Conclusion

METHODOLOGY

In this paper we are going to answer our study questions and our hypothesis by quoting parts of the relevant literature related to this subject. We are going to start by the following title: "Inspiration and appropriation: crime or universal expression?" this part is going to clear up doubts about the issue of copyright versus appropriation. We are also going to give the example of the *obelisk in Paris* as an illustration of cultural and art inspiration.

After that, we are going to focus on the title "Pop Art: an authorized creative cultural appropriation". This part is going to show problems of stolen art. It is also going to show that Pop Art belongs to the 20th century kinds of arts that use appropriation as a method. This is going to allow us to provide answers regarding our doubt about the Pop Art being an authorized method of cultural appropriation in order to express messages.

By doing this we are going to move to the title: "Pop Art: a meta tool to diverse communication goals". In this part of our study we are

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going to emphasize the polemics about the scope of Pop art and its goals. We are also going to focus on the capacity of Pop art to address large publics by its methods inspired from existing art works. It is also an opportunity to emphasize the capacity of Pop art to target different messages in diverse communication supports and in different kinds of spaces.

RESULTS

Inspiration and appropriation: crime or universal expression ?

There is no need to prove that cultural appropriation spreads all over the world. The boundaries between inspiration and appropriation are sometimes hard to establish. Though, it is important to refer to the owner of a masterpiece if a serious will guides good intentions.

Nowadays, copyrights are in full expansion and require meticulous attention from every artist. In this current study we are interested in art issues. In this context we must specify that the awareness of the phenomenon of cultural appropriation has started since 1990 with conflicts about pop¹ music and pop culture in North America according to (Richard Mèmeteau, 2016):

““Cultural appropriation” is a concept coined in the 1990s to characterize the disrespectful use of native cultures by white North Americans. It was the driving force behind victorious struggles for recognition of the integrity of these cultures. But the concept has recently reappeared in a completely different context, that of pop culture, where black American singers and actresses use it[...].”². (Richard Mèmeteau, 2016, 48-57).

The artist whose art has been stolen is not left to his own lamentations anymore. In the last decades, a big number of regulations protecting artist and art rights have been observed. Legal proceedings demonstrate the universal awareness of the importance of protecting copyrights:

“Since 2013, this distrust of appropriation has been explicitly formulated in pop culture. Plagiarism lawsuits are more numerous for economic and legal reasons. But also taking root is the deeper idea that art, whether scholarly or popular, can no longer be separated from the socio-historical conditions of its existence.”³. (Richard Mèmeteau, 2016, 48-57).

A lot of cases of appropriation have left their marks in cultural and artistic history. Indeed, the painter Picasso and the poet Robert Bringham and other artists have been inspired by the global culture to create their masterpieces. But the real question is: have they been really inspired or did they fall in cultural appropriation? James O. Young (2010) through the book « *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* » refers to them and lists other artists who did fall in cultural appropriation:

“Artists from many cultures are constantly engaging in cultural appropriation. Picasso famously appropriated motifs which originated in the work of African carvers. [...]”

The jazz and blues styles developed in the context of African-American culture have been appropriated by non-members of the cul-ture from Bix Beiderbecke to Eric Clapton. [...] The poet Robert Bringham has retold stories produced by members of North American First Nations. [...]”⁴. (James O. Young 2010).

Cultural heritages travel around the world and cross boundaries and history in different ways. We refer to valuable gifts that have been used to deepen diplomatic relationships between kings and politicians. One of the famous examples is the obelisk decorating the Place of Concorde in Paris. It has been offered by Egypt in Napoleon’s period. This masterpiece has been imitated by the work of the american artist Newman BARNETT :

“The obelisk on the Place de la Concorde in Paris, a gift from the King of Egypt to the King of France, was transported and erected in France in 1836, and evokes Napoleon’s military campaigns in Egypt. From Luxor to Paris, from Paris to New York and from New York to Mexico... [...]. These various stages of displacement induce a process of metamorphosis [described by] the term aesthetic recycling [...]. Unlike the kings of Egypt and France, Newman did not move any material objects. But he did take up the idea of the obelisk [...]. His “recycling” of the obelisk, however, involves a major transformation.”⁵. (Jean Klucinska et Walter Moser 2004).

We referred to this example for a good reason: declare sources. When the inspiration source of an artistic work is declared, the creativity is applauded. But in the opposite case, when the inspiration source is hidden, the crime of appropriation is committed. However, with global cultural heritages, it’s sometimes difficult to establish boundaries between cultural appropriation and inspiration.

Pop Art: an authorized creative cultural appropriation

We remind that the term appropriation originates, since the 19th century, from practices of colonialism stealing occupied lands’ museums’ resources according to (Eftihia Mihelakis, 2004) :

“Since the 19th century, the term “cultural appropriation”, [has] designated the “confiscation or theft [...] of a cultural resource [...]. It is used to refer [...] to colonial violence that has been expatriated and preserved within museum collections inherited from former colonial empires.”⁶. (Eftihia Mihelakis 2019).

It is true that cultural heritages merge one in another, however the notion of « métissage », “crossbreeding” has been invented to dilate harmful effects of cultural appropriation also according to (Eftihia Mihelakis 2004) :

“Catherine Marvikakis, meanwhile, invites the reader to reflect on the transformative effects of literature and the

⁴James O. Young. 2010. *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, 1 p. Wiley Blackwell Disponible: [https://www.google.co.ma/books/edition/Cultural Appropriation and the Arts/oxvOsvs4Zw0C?hl=fr&gbpv=1&dq=appropriation+culturelle&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.co.ma/books/edition/Cultural%20Appropriation%20and%20the%20Arts/oxvOsvs4Zw0C?hl=fr&gbpv=1&dq=appropriation+culturelle&printsec=frontcover)

⁵Jean Klucinska et Walter Moser. 2004. *Esthétique et recyclages culturels Explorations de la culture contemporaine*. Ottawa. Les Presses de l’Université D’Ottawa. 2 p. Disponible: [https://www.google.co.ma/books/edition/Esth%C3%A9tique et recyclages culturels/9c_BDAAAQBAJ?hl=fr&gbpv=1&dq=appropriation+culturelle+et+globalisation&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.co.ma/books/edition/Esth%C3%A9tique%20et%20recyclages%20culturels/9c_BDAAAQBAJ?hl=fr&gbpv=1&dq=appropriation+culturelle+et+globalisation&printsec=frontcover) , Consulté en novembre 2023 Translated from french to english with DeepL.com (free of charge version)

⁶Eftihia Mihelakis. 2019. *Parler pour autrui : que dit l’appropriation culturelle ?*. 10-13 p. extension: /efaidnbmnnnibpajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/spirale/2019-n268-spirale04668/91062ac.pdf.

¹Pop art is a different form of art. Pop art is not a part of pop music.

²Richard Mèmeteau. 2016. Translated from french to english with DeepL.com (free of charge version)

³Richard Mèmeteau. 2016. *Touche pas à ma musique ! Controverses sur l’appropriation des cultures minoritaires*. 48 - 57 p. Disponible:

<https://www.cairn.info/revue-du-crieur-2016-2-page-48.htm>

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arts, and on the challenges of speaking in the place of others. [...] In fact, métissage would deconstruct the idea of purity that underpins the great homogeneous narratives. [...] the latter are often instrumentalized by neoliberal discourse to delegitimize the harmful effects of cultural appropriation. ⁷. (Eftihia Mihelakis 2019).

Transitions that have distinguished the world of art are multiple. This is especially remarkable when art is seen as cultural heritages vector. Modern art forms of the 20th century such as Pop art show the presence of appropriation as an inseparable process:

"[...] appropriation is a process inseparable from the major artistic avant-gardes of the 20th century (Dadaism, Surrealism, Fluxus, Pop Art...)." ⁸ (Monique JEUDY-BALLINI 2015).

A paradox occurred since then. These kinds of art who use the most appropriation/inspiration are the most accepted ones.

Pop art that evolved since 1950 is distinguished by its capacity to represent existing art works to reproduce them in other ways as a mean of expression (collages, reconfigurations, conceptions, recoloriages...). There are so many examples of pop art work that have known a big success and treated subjects related to issues of the society:

"Pop art reached a wider audience with the environments of *This Is Tomorrow* (Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1956). The poster by Hamilton, who organized the exhibition, *Just what is it that Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?* (artist's collection), is today considered the founding work of pop; this collage of images of consumer society reconstructs an interior cacophonously and ironically saturated with modernity and technology. ⁹. (Encyclopaedia Universalis 2016)

Pop art and other kinds of art of 20th century are the manifestation of intercultural union in full expansion. Pop art is one of the artistic forms of creative cultural appropriation that is accepted and approved. Pop art has known how to impose itself since its appearing.

Pop Art a meta tool to diverse communication goals

Used among other goals for mass media communication, pop art has known a huge propagation around the world. It is easy to look around in public spaces (in the restaurants, in firms' walls, in buildings, in big markets and malls) to notice an enormous and a huge presence of universal cultural traces reproduced in all kinds of artistic

expressions. We precise that this kind of art since the beginning came as a way to express intense sensations:

"It has now been several years since Pop Art appeared on the New York scene as a reaction to Abstract Expressionism's emphasis upon interior states of mind and moral absolutes. " (Sandberg, John. 1967) ¹⁰.

Pop Art is a kind of art that was made for different goals. It was also a weapon to deliver mass media messages. Though it's perceived in different ways and creates polemics for different audiences all over the world. Liam Considine (2015) puts the emphasis on this for french audience in 1960 :

"In 1960s France, American pop art was largely perceived to be an infantile neo-dada provocation, an attack on painterly technique via mass media images and the ideological agent of a foreign consumer society. Although some French critics were sympathetic, consternation over pop art's mechanisation of painterly technique largely obscured the political relevance of its popular imagery and challenge to aesthetic hierarchies. [...] Discussions over the production and content of the posters derived from recent artistic debates over pop art and the parameters of modern realism, revealing the political limitations of traditional artistic formats such as easel painting in the era of mass media. ¹¹ (Liam Considine 2015)

Despite the polemic Pop Art has created, there is no doubt about its capacity to create strong images that allow artist to address their audience with different kinds of messages. Pop art is not the only kind of art that has this capacity. It belongs to other 20th century forms of art to embrace the fact that art has a big capacity of communication in public area and in mass media. Galleries are not the exclusive space where an artist can provide strong reflections in relationship with its environment.

DISCUSSION

In this paper we could answer different research questions and hypothesis. We remind the following ones: Is there a difference between appropriation and creativity? Does Pop Art respect copyright? What communication scope does Pop Art have? We **remind also** the following hypothesis that we thought about to answer our research questions: H1 : The 20th century art like Pop Art is based on appropriation and doesn't respect copyrights; H2 : The 20th century art like Pop Art is based on appropriation and respects copyrights; H3 : The 20th century art like Pop Art is based on appropriation and it helps it to communicate to a large public.

For this study, to answer these questions and hypothesis we have been through a structured argumentation based on relevant quotes from literature in these fields. As a main result we may now say for sure that pop art is an allowed kind of appropriation and inspiration since it shows its sources. Pop art is accepted as a kind of art inspiration because it never tries to hide its sources or copy them

⁷Ibid. Translated from french to english with DeepL.com (free of charge version)

⁸Monique JEUDY-BALLINI. 2015. Arts et appropriations transculturelles Brigitte Derlon, Cahiers d'anthropologie sociale, 9 - 23 p. . Disponible: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-cahiers-d-anthropologie-sociale-2015-2-page-9.htm>

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⁹Encyclopaedia Universalis Les Années pop 1956-1968. 2016. Les Fiches Exposition d'Universalis Paris, Ed. Encyclopaedia Universalis, sp, Disponible: [https://www.google.co.ma/books/edition/Les_Ann%C3%A9es_pop_1956_1968_Paris_2001/txskDQAAQBAJ?hl=fr&qbpv=1&dq=%22%5B%E2%80%A6%5D+le+pop+art+tou+cha+un+plus+large+public+avec+les+environnements+de+This+Is+Tomorrow+\(Whitechapel+Gallery,+Londres,+1956\).+L%27affiche+de+Hamilton,+organisateur+de+l%27exposition,+Just+what+is+it+that+Makes+Today%27s+Homes+so+Different,+so+Appealing+ng+%3F+\(collection+de+l%27artiste\),+est+aujourd%27hui+consid%C3%A9+C3%A9+e+comme+l%27oeuvre+fondatrice+du+pop+%3B+ce+collage+d%27images+de+la+so+ci%C3%A9+C3%A9+de+consommation+reconstitue+un+int%C3%A9rieur+cacophoniquement+et+ironiquement+satur%C3%A9+de+modernité+C3%A9+et+de+technologie%22&pg=PT10&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.co.ma/books/edition/Les_Ann%C3%A9es_pop_1956_1968_Paris_2001/txskDQAAQBAJ?hl=fr&qbpv=1&dq=%22%5B%E2%80%A6%5D+le+pop+art+tou+cha+un+plus+large+public+avec+les+environnements+de+This+Is+Tomorrow+(Whitechapel+Gallery,+Londres,+1956).+L%27affiche+de+Hamilton,+organisateur+de+l%27exposition,+Just+what+is+it+that+Makes+Today%27s+Homes+so+Different,+so+Appealing+ng+%3F+(collection+de+l%27artiste),+est+aujourd%27hui+consid%C3%A9+C3%A9+e+comme+l%27oeuvre+fondatrice+du+pop+%3B+ce+collage+d%27images+de+la+so+ci%C3%A9+C3%A9+de+consommation+reconstitue+un+int%C3%A9rieur+cacophoniquement+et+ironiquement+satur%C3%A9+de+modernité+C3%A9+et+de+technologie%22&pg=PT10&printsec=frontcover)

¹⁰Sandberg, John. 1967. *Some Traditional Aspects of Pop Art*. *Art Journal*, 26(3), 228–245. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1967.10794146>

¹¹Liam Considine. 2015. *'Screen Politics: Pop Art and the Atelier Populaire'*, *Tate Papers*, no.24, Autumn, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/24/screen-politics-pop-art-and-the-atelier-populaire>, accessed 22 December 2015.

illegally. This paper allowed us to go through a scientific argumentation, so we mainly emphasize the following focus points:

- It is important to distinguish between creativity, inspiration and stolen art.
- Copyrights should imperatively be respected.
- Inspiration is rejected when the artist doesn't show his sources. It becomes appropriation.
- Once the artist says he has been inspired by another one or by a masterpiece or by a specific culture, he is free of stealing charges. Doing this allows him to pay homage to his art sources.
- The 20th century has given birth to a lot of kinds of art that uses appropriation and creativity as a method of work. Pop Art is one of them.
- Pop Art has the strength to nest many pieces of art in order to address global messages.
- The strength of Pop Art comes from its capacity to spread messages to a big scope of audience. It also visits diverse kinds of spaces, public and private ones. This makes it viral.

CONCLUSION

The paradox created by Pop Art opposes creativity in one hand and appropriation in the other hand. The resulting wealth of cultural mixture seduces artists and allows them to contribute to the global cultural patrimony. Cultural heritage creates a cultural wealth, it also resources creativity but leaves artists to a difficult test. The test of honesty and the respect of what belongs to other artists or other cultures: copyrights.

New kinds of art have given artists multiple choices when they made creativity and inspiration a process of art. The novelty is that artist admit their sources of inspirations and create strong messages by re-editing masterpieces that existed and that carry history and ancestral messages addressed to a large public.

Pop art is one of the 20th century figures of art that has freed itself from copyright restrictions. By doing so, it pays homage to the artists who inspired their works and it also allows new artists to nest messages that can reach a huge scope of audiences. It goes out from museum, it climbs various private and public spaces.

This study has shown the importance of Pop art as a form of allowed appropriation and inspiration to address messages and to visit different kinds of spaces. This is one of its strong points. We are also aware that our study has limits, in fact, there are a lot of kinds of art that this paper doesn't cover because it was not among its goals. This paper also can have perspectives in another space by studying a big amount of Pop Art Products, their messages and the communication effects it creates.

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