

## Editorial

This issue of *Music and Arts in Action* (MAiA) marks the start of our second year. As we arrive at our third issue, it has become clear that our desire to give musical and artistic forms a more central place in the study and understanding of social life is shared by many. This particular issue fulfils three inter-related aims of MAiA: to extend and enhance the understanding of the role that aesthetic objects play in everyday life, to provide a space for dialogues around this topic, and to bring into the spotlight important work that deserves a second look.

Robert Witkin's paper does all this. His investigation into the aesthetics of organisations — as exemplified by Unilever's corporate boardroom — was originally written 20 years ago, and we are very happy to be allowed to reprint a slightly edited version here with additional commentary by Jeffrey Alexander and Paul Atkinson. At the core of this discussion are ideas of how aesthetics aid, abet, and accommodate actions. As Atkinson points out in his remarks on Witkin's paper, scant attention has been paid to aesthetics in the history of social research; the result is that sociology loses many of the contextual features of action and organisation in social worlds. This, of course, is where MAiA hopes to make a contribution. Alexander's detailed commentary engages vigorously with Witkin's paper and, together with Witkin's reply, provides further thoughts on the ongoing aesthetic organisation of everyday life.

While Witkin looks at the boardroom as the outcome of modern design, social regulation, and mass production, Andrea Siegel traces the history and use of a modern mass produced item, architectural terra-cotta, and in the process demonstrates the role objects play in shaping social networks. Objects, such as artistic forms, are too often reduced to interchangeable variables of no importance, but as Siegel convincingly shows, they are embedded in and revelatory of social relations.

Responses to the mass production of artistic forms have often resulted in artistic revolts, for instance, the reactionary growth of the punk music scene. In a follow-up to Corte and Edwards' article on white power music in MAiA's launch issue (1:1), Roberts and Moore's paper explores further the role of punk music and punk sensitivity in mass movements. Here, modes of action developed by the punk music movement are also shown to be deployed in political action. Roberts and Moore also implicitly underline Siegel's points about the integral and material role played by objects (in this case punk music) in the end result of a social action; easy listening music would likely have generated very different movement strategies and networks than punk did.

Punk musicians were (as a matter of course) labelled deviants when the music entered mainstream consciousness in the latter half of the 1970s. However, the label of deviance is not unique to modern popular musics, it is also a badge shared by

styles and composers of classical music. Nathan Pinto takes a tour through classical music criticism over the past 200 years and illuminates the use of deviance as a tool to resist change in music, as in other walks of life.

Together, these original and varied papers provide a rich dialogue around music, art, and aesthetics, and also open the door for further contributions by readers of MAiA who would like to contribute papers in response to these ideas. We at MAiA are also looking forward to the first of a series of themed issues, to be published annually. The next and winter 2009/2010 issue will explore the role of music and arts in conflict transformation/peace building, and will later be followed by a special issue on the arts and health. The calls for papers for these two special issues remains open.

### **THE EDITORIAL TEAM, *MUSIC AND ARTS IN ACTION***

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