

EDITORIAL: Distinctive approaches to visual culture analysis

The articles in this second issue of *Art on the line* offer some distinctive approaches to the analysis of visual culture in its widest sense. In *Putting the magic back into design: from object fetishism to product semantics and beyond*, Rafael Cardoso poses the fundamental but vital question, 'exactly how do objects of art and design express ideas through their appearance, shape and use?' By analysing 'object fetishism' within the context of contemporary debates addressing product semantics, Cardoso explores the relationship between artefacts and their signification and challenges common assumptions regarding the relationship between form and meaning with specific reference to new conceptions of product life cycle and post-use.

In *Juvenile delinquency and art in Amerika* Mike O'Mahony revisits debates concerning the political deployment of visual culture during the Cold War. However, his primary object of focus is the rarely explored Russian language journal *Amerika*, published by the United States Information Agency and distributed in the Soviet Union as part of a USA/USSR cultural exchange programme. Whilst *Amerika* was very much a general magazine addressing a wide range of popular issues, it also included regular coverage of the visual arts. This article examines the ways in which *Amerika* contributed specifically to the promotion of American cultural values within the Soviet Union. At the same time, however, it identifies a range of diverse approaches and strategies deployed within the journal to suggest a more complex approach to promoting American art than has commonly been reported.

Simon Pierse's article *Peeling off the skin: Antony Gormley's Inside Australia* takes us to the remote region of Lake Ballard in Western Australia. It was on this site that British sculptor Antony Gormley installed a series of fifty-one stainless steel figures as part of a commission to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Perth International Arts Festival in 2003. Pierse explores this work within the context of the social, geographical and historical setting of Lake Ballard. In particular he considers the ways in which the work suggests affinities with local indigenous art and concepts of community and culture. Originally conceived as a festival specific work, plans are now in place to retain *Inside Australia* as a permanent monument 'offering the tourist a spiritual pilgrimage into Australia's interior'.

In the *Art Extra* section of this issue, Carol Adlam and Alexey Makhrov present a major article outlining the development of the AHRB funded electronic archive *Russian Visual Arts, 1800-1913*, produced by a team of scholars from the University of Exeter, the University of Sheffield, the British Library and the National Library of Russia. This invaluable electronic archive provides access to an extensive range of both visual and textual material, including many key texts translated in English for the first time. Adlam and Makhrov offer a detailed account of the motivation, methodology and content of the project as well as providing numerous links to the database itself. Indeed the project exemplifies the ways in which electronic information technology can be successfully deployed to deliver high quality research material to the wider academic community.

In the reviews section we have contributions on a number of recent key exhibitions including: *Pre-Raphaelites and Other Masters* (Royal Academy of Arts, London); *Elizabeth* (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich); *Shakespeare in Art* (Dulwich Picture Gallery, London) and *Dream Factory Communism: The Visual Culture of the Stalin Era* (Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt). From the third issue of *Art on the line* onwards we will be incorporating regular book reviews into this section.

The Editor