

EDITORIAL: Issue 6, Spring 2009

This issue is all about ways of seeing. There is a photograph depicting a bird's-eye-view of a child in Beijing (Image – Kenzo Ejiri); an architectural re-vision of the landmarks of London (Prof. CJ Lim); and a single webpage displaying the front pages of hundreds of newspapers from around the world (Martin John Callanan). Our newly-added image gallery certainly contributes to the foregrounding of visuality and the ideological shifts which it precipitates. But it's not just visual material which inspires new ways of seeing; words perform the same function in an equally compelling manner. In this issue, there are 6 articles, 1 creative work, and 6 submissions categorized as either commentary or research notes. These are complemented by the winning entries of the Graduate School Review Competition, written by Katharina Rietzler (first prize), Nick Shepley (second prize) and Piergiorgio Di Giminiani (third prize) – our congratulations to you! All the materials offer new ways of *reading* and not merely perceiving the text, research project, place, historical event or biological condition that is presented. I'd like to think that research, as sampled here and shown elsewhere at UCL, provides a panoramic view of the world both within the academic sphere and beyond it.

For this issue and the autumn one, I've included submissions on Bloomsbury, for this is an area of London that we are all familiar with, a location where an uninterrupted stream of great ideas has been circulated for at least two centuries. As shown in the three entries (including images) on the Bloomsbury Project (by Prof. Rosemary Ashton, Dr Deborah Colville and Dr Carole Reeves), pioneering ideas continue to reshape the Bloomsbury as we know it, and UCL is very much a part of that cultural and socio-geographic redefinition.

This issue also displays a distinctly political strain. America seems to be in the cultural or academic subconscious. Whether it's a reevaluation of the American Civil War (Adam Thomas), an analysis of the complications and promises of presidency (Dr Adam Smith; Katharina Rietzler), or a deconstruction of the American Dream as depicted in film noir (Adam Thomas), the 'Americanism' exposes concerns that are relevant to the present. The discussions in this issue address the problem of unrest and disillusionment, not just in the context of American politics, but in a wider framework, whether historically (as with the detonation of the atomic bomb; Adam Gyngell), or in relation to the ongoing debate on gender inequality (Shona Tritt). Nevertheless, politics offers the potential for paradigmatic shifts (Emma Kelly), for seeing the world anew.

We would also like to see *Opticon* anew. There is an ongoing project for expansion and increased publicity, which is not an uncomplicated process. Primarily, we hope to raise the awareness of the journal within the UCL community, to offer an electronic platform for the circulation of ideas. After all, e-publication redefines how we see academic journalism. Be sure to look out for the *Opticon* pamphlets, featuring extracts from the current issue, to be distributed throughout UCL in May.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Next time you have a picnic on Primrose Hill (Prof. CJ Lim), pass by an ash tree (Michael Bintley) or spy a salamander (Stephen Fleming), perhaps you will see things differently. To borrow the title of Dr Kara Cervený's captivating image: *The eyes have it*.

Christine Lai
Editor-in-chief
On behalf of the Editorial Board

Nota Bene: The letter submitted by Jenny Gimpel in response to Martin Sewell's article 'Gender(*sic*) Equality (*sic*)' and published in our Issue 5 mistakenly stated that pigs have 430 billion neocortical neurons, while the actual number is 430 million. An amended version has been uploaded. Jenny Gimpel and the Editors of *Opticon1826* apologise for the oversight.