

## ANN CRAVEN

**"Renoir in the 20th Century" (Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, Paris)** While visiting Paris en route to New York last winter, I made my way through room after room of late Renoir *Bathers* at the Grand Palais. The show sent me straight to the moon—just as the Boston MFA's 1985 Renoir exhibition, which was dismissed as full of fat pink ladies, changed my life forever. Even after a hundred years, these paintings are still getting bad press. In his *New York Times* review this past June, Holland Cotter claimed that Renoir's "figures, with blurry edges . . . make surprisingly little impact." I think his edges are genius; no beginning, no end, just one continuous flow. Renoir's color softens the blow and comes straight from the soul. It makes people mad. It makes me want to paint.

## Building Sites 1952–62"

The Courtauld's exhibition of oil studies, and pencil drawings sites was well timed, as this more perforated than usual by projects. The rooms at the top of Art appeared small and polite construction sites, their structured and chemical processes. Emblems of a city's aggregate and their sense of transformation layers of paint. Executed from site, the artist's dark, almost a glimpse of the archaic past imagined in midcentury London.



**The Locked Room. 'A' Course combinations-of-materials project, St. Martins College of Art, sculpture department, London, 1971.** Photo: Peter Venn.

## NILS NORMAN

**"An Inquiry" (forum conducted by the 10th Floor, St. Martins College of Art and Design, London)** Established by artist-writer Anthony Davies, the 10th Floor, based at St. Martins College of Art and Design, has become an oasis for students, artists, and critical thinkers. This 10th Floor went public, hosting a two-day conference on a legendary pedagogical experiment conducted in the sculpture department during the early 1970s. Many former students were present, together with the three surviving teachers (Norman, Gareth Jones, and Peter Kardia), providing for an artistic reunion, introspection, collaborative historicization, and critical reflection. Seeing the school's unorthodox past collide with its current administration was unforgettable. The 10th Floor offers a glimmer of hope for London's tired and lackluster scene.

## LIANG YUANWEI

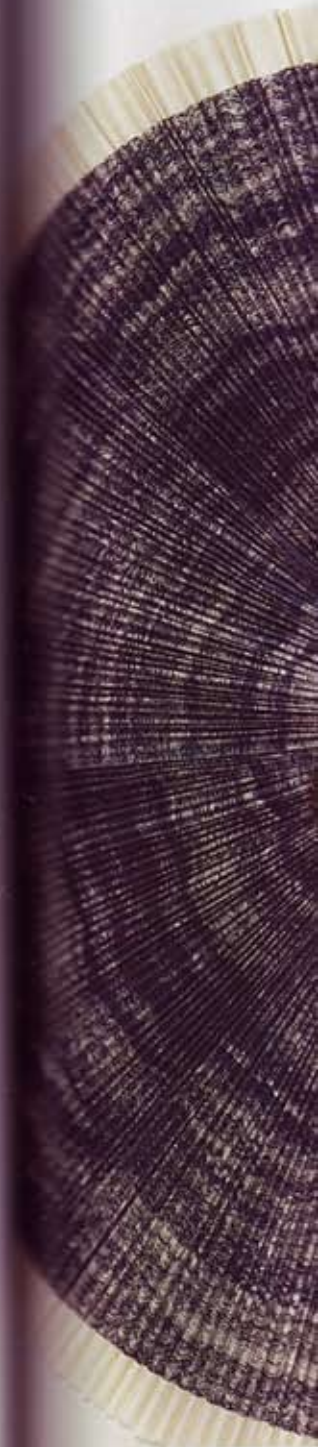
**51m<sup>2</sup> (Taikang Space, Beijing)** As the exhibition and research space of a corporate collection, Taikang Space has designated fifty-one square meters for hosting two-week exhibitions by young artists. In a city lacking viable unprivatized staging grounds for art, 51m<sup>2</sup> serves as a welcome haven and wisely avoids two potential dead ends: merely showing as much work as possible in order to establish some kind of authority, and treating a single specimen as a representative of the whole. The exhibitions are neither grand productions nor clumsy rehearsals; they lie somewhere in between—like a music show. If art viewing in China were as fluid as Asia's underground music scene, then perhaps our arts ecosystem would flourish.

## SIMON DYBBROE MØLLER

**Thomas Kratz (Croy Nielsen, Berlin)** Standing in front of Kratz's flesh-toned works in Berlin last spring, I found myself puzzled and amazed. With titles such as *Apoll* (Apollo) and *Artemis*, these "skin" paintings are contradictory in every way: at once attractive and repulsive; incredibly earnest, yet light and funny; full of arcane references but in a clumsy way, so as to thereby seem strangely simple and real. Here handcrafted materiality intersects the random nature of industrial production. Working with acrylic on fabricated glass, Kratz makes paintings that are at once representational and purely abstract; dryly minimal and wildly all-encompassing; flat but in fact layered; as well as chaotic, complex, direct, dumb, elegant, expressive, and hilarious. If they were intended to dissolve hierarchy, they succeed. □



**Thomas Kratz, Apoll (Apollo), 2010, acrylic on glass on wood on aluminum, 23 3/4 x 16 1/2". Installation view, Croy Nielsen, Berlin. Photo: Linda Fuchs.**



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