

BEST OF 2010

Every December, *Artforum* invites a wide range of artists, critics, and curators to take a look back at the year in art. In the pages that follow, fourteen contributors choose their top ten highlights of 2010, while three others pick single standout exhibitions. And to round out our reflections, philosopher **Bruno Latour**, critic **John Kelsey**, and artist **Michael Smith** give three very different takes on the year that was.

Thomas Crow
Daniel Birnbaum
Christine Macel
Richard Hawkins
Okwui Enwezor
Lynne Cooke
Jack Bankowsky
Anne M. Wagner
Matthew Higgs
Michael Ned Holte
Pauline J. Yao
Jeffrey Kastner
Victoria Noorthoorn
Sandhini Poddar
Chris Dercon
Helen Molesworth
Hal Foster

Helen Molesworth



Helen Molesworth is the chief curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. She is currently working on "Dance/Draw," an exhibition that traces the persistence of line in post-medium art. Additionally, she is organizing a show about the art of the 1980s, which will open in winter 2012.

1

Sharon Hayes, *Parole* (Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York) This haunting video, projected on multiple screens, presents a fragmented Godardian narrative—literary scholar Lauren Berlant discusses intimacy's philosophical implications, someone reads a love letter, and so on. The redheaded protagonist performs empathy while remaining mute and listens to it all via omnipresent sound equipment. When the red-haired attempts to capture the sounds emanating from a dancer's body, we know we are at the limit of our sensorium and at the threshold of a new kind of knowledge.

2

Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns* (Random House) Wilkerson's page-turner tells the story of the Great Migration, when millions of African Americans moved from the rural South to America's major cities, especially Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. Reading it gave me not only a much-needed history lesson but also a more political and intimate understanding of the emergence and development of America's cultural centers.

3

Amy Sillman (Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York) Sillman continues her exploration of Abstract Expressionism but has added a mash-up of two forms of drawing: the cartoon and the diagram. One line is neurotic, humorous, and descriptive of the social systems that govern our interior lives; the other is directive, emptying, and schematic. The subject matter is sex—its bottomless pleasure and its profound awkwardness. The cartoon-diagram hybrid shows us this nexus at the levels of both fascia and bone. These paintings are not so much *jolie laide* as the deep American variant, sublime gawky.

4

Kerry James Marshall (Vancouver Art Gallery; curated by Kathleen S. Bartels and Jeff Wall) This exhibition demonstrated, once again, that Marshall is a great artist. (I await the proper installation of his work in the permanent-collection galleries at MoMA, the Met, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, LACMA, etc.) His project is several-fold: to introduce into the museum the images and history of African-American life, to make history paintings for the present, and to situate contemporary painting among



its many competing image systems. His paintings are frequently stunning, due not only to their pictorial complexity and great paint handling but also to the artist's high regard for his subjects.

5

Lari Pittman (Regen Projects and Regen Projects II, Los Angeles) Curator Paul Schimmel once said Lari Pittman never drops a trick, and the thirty-year drawing and painting survey "Orangerie" formed a veritable dictionary of the artist's themes and motifs: eighteenth-century script, gourds, body parts, eggs, owls, silhouettes, a Technicolor palette, cacti, a host of decorative patterns, and myriad forms of mark-making. The new paintings offer a circus of glassy surfaces through which one can see the above and more, all in an attempt to reorient us to the world as Pittman sees it—a surfeit of heterogeneity that everywhere resists our desire for control.

6

"elles@centrepompidou" (Centre Pompidou, Paris; curated by Camille Morineau) When the Pompidou announced plans to reinstall its permanent-collection galleries exclusively with art by women, my queer friends, who largely feel postgender, greeted the news with ambivalence. But feeling postgender doesn't neutralize the institutionalization of sexism under the rubric of "aesthetic excellence," a discursive formation that continues to thrive in "major" museums. The exhibition showed us that whether the galleries are filled exclusively with art by men or by women, the narrative sweep of twentieth-century art remains intact. But the real question is whether this is a sign of "victory" or an indication of the inadequacy of our current art-historical story.



7. Left: Melvin Edwards, *His and Hers*, 1964, welded steel, 10 1/2 x 6 x 4 1/2". From the series "Lynch Fragments," 1963–.

8. Above: View of "Heat Waves in a Swamp: The Paintings of Charles Burchfield," 2010, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Photo: Sheldon C. Collins.

7

Melvin Edwards (Alexander Gray Associates, New York) Using the same language as Mark di Suvero and Anthony Caro—welded steel, abstract arabesques, and the general look and feel of an industrial junkyard—Edwards's small but revelatory 1960s sculptures speak less to the problem of drawing or painting in space than to the ruthless history of American slavery and the long rule of Jim Crow. Like three-dimensional enactments of W. E. B. DuBois's notion of double consciousness, the works suggest that both "race" and "art" are untenable abstractions as well as everyday realities.

8

Charles Burchfield (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; curated by Robert Gober) Burchfield was a master animator of the inanimate: His trees are ghoulish, his rocks whisper, his houses moan. Gober emphasized Burchfield's amazing tendency to add sheets of paper to putatively finished drawings in a kind of infinite expansion of the known world. Installing works atop wallpaper designed by Burchfield, Gober also took a decisive

9. Below: View of "Roni Horn aka Roni Horn," 2010, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Foreground: Pink Tons, 2008.

10. Below, right: Ishimoto Yasuhiro, Untitled, ca. 1953, black-and-white photograph, 6 1/2 x 9 1/2". From the series "Katsura," 1953–54.



step toward breaking the white cube's stranglehold on the contemporary curatorial imagination.

Co-organized by the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and the Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

9

Roni Horn (Tate Modern, London; curated by Mark Godfrey, Carter E. Foster, and Donna De Salvo) I recently heard an anecdote in which David Antin, on being asked how he was doing, replied: "I'm waiting for Minimalism to die." And who isn't just a touch fatigued by the way all sculpture must establish Minimalism as both its ground and its lodestar? Horn appears to be simultaneously fed up and indebted—hence *Pink Tons*, 2008, her massive five-ton cube of pink glass, was shot through with imperfections: cracks that refracted sunlight through the undulating waves of its vertiginous interior. The shade of pink was shocking—the color of the most sensitive of flesh. The sculpture sat obdurate and silent but expectant, waiting for the day it would, due to the forces of minute molecular movement, break open, shattering in ecstasy.

Co-organized with the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

10

Ishimoto Yasuhiro (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; curated by Yasufumi Nakamori) In 1953 and '54, Ishimoto Yasuhiro (born 1921) took a series of photographs of the seventeenth-century Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto. Before this gem of a show, the images were known only through a 1960 book edited by famed architect Kenzo Tange, with an introduction by Walter Gropius. In this iconic book, Tange radically cropped and sequenced the photos to force the relationship between Japanese imperial architecture and international modernism. The exhibition showed the photos as Ishimoto had intended them along with Tange's versions, posing questions not only about reception and intentionality but also about the historical scope and present-day meaning of that ever-fetishized construct, globalism. □

