

Critics' choice

Visual arts Jackie Wullschlager

imperial retreat of Yuanmingyuan, before they were ransacked by European troops in 1860. Ai focuses on questions of how authenticity and value are determined by social understandings – a theme coursing through his oeuvre.

The same mix of conceptual acuteness and lyricism marks the works at Lisson – including a group of bright, industrially painted Neolithic vases, the 2005 highway video "Beijing: The Second Ring", and the 81 boxes in Huanghuali wood, cut through with circles to create dark crescent silhouettes, comprising "Moon Chest". All explore a tension in ideology that Ai describes as "being between a more interesting state of mind and a more dreadful state of mind. The artist should be for the interesting against the dreadful."

www.somersethouse.org.uk,

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Flashback, Celebrating 25 Years

Art Space Gallery, London N1

Michael Richardson's gallery has built a reputation for showing an excellent range of contemporary painting and sculpture, mostly figurative, by mid-career and eminent British artists who have resisted conceptual fashion. This exhibition brings together work by 30 of those who have had solo shows here since 1986, including Leon Kossoff, Anthony Green, Anthony Whishaw, Michael Sandle, Terry Setch and Henry Kondracki; notable younger figures are John Moores winner Martin Greenland and Nick Miller. www.artspacegallery.co.uk +44 (0)20 7359 7002, to June 11