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ART CITIES:N. York-Lisa Yuskavage



Over the past three decades Lisa Yuskavage has developed her own genre of the female nude: lavish, erotic, cartoonish, vulgar, angelic young women cast within fantastical landscapes or dramatically lit interiors. They appear to occupy their own realm while narcissistically contemplating themselves and their bodies. Rich, atmospheric skies frequently augment the psychologically-charged mood, further adding to the impression of theatricality and creative possibility.

By Efi Michalarou
Photo: David Zwirner Gallery

For more than thirty years Lisa Yuskavage's works are characterized by an ongoing engagement with the history of painting. Her oeuvre bears witness to a re-emergence of the figurative in contemporary painting and takes its point of departure in part in the immediacy and tawdriness of contemporary life spurred by the mass media and the psycho-social realm of the individual. Two concurrent exhibitions of works by Lisa Yuskavage are on presentation at David Zwirner Gallery in New York. **"Babie Brood: Small Paintings 1985–2018"** is the first survey of the artist's small-scale paintings, which have been a constant and integral part of her oeuvre since the mid-1980s. Consisting mostly of loans, Yuskavage's small paintings spans key examples from her most important series to date and includes many works exhibited for the first time. At times playful and harmonious, and at other times rueful and conflicted, her characters are cast within fantastical compositions in which realistic and abstract elements coexist and color determines meaning. While the artist's painterly techniques evoke art historical precedents, her motifs are often inspired by popular culture, creating an underlying dichotomy between high and low and, by implication, sacred and profane, harmony and dissonance. Yet her oeuvre compellingly resists categorization, insisting instead on its own kind of emotional formalism in which characters and pictorial inventions assume equal importance. Various and often concurrently based on the artist's imagination, maquettes, In **"Blonde Jerking Off"** (1995), a prime example from her early series **"Babies"**, a woman's body materializes from monochrome mist with no counterpart in reality, her hyperbolic features animated by notions of shame and shamelessness alike. Both line and color are further exaggerated in the **"Bad Habits"** works from the mid-1990s, for which the artist used sculpted maquettes set on small stages. Her **"Penthouse"** series, started around the same period, takes its point of departure in found photographs, at once adopting and subverting expectations of pornographic imagery. Works like **"Screwing Her Pussy on Straight"** (1997) epitomize this tension by upending the expected power dynamics between an observer and a nude model. By contrast, the woman depicted in **"Grey Bedroom"** (2002) from the **"Northview"** series was based on staged photos of a childhood friend, Kathy, modelig semi-nude in a lush

boudoir. The impression of solitude is enhanced by the color palette, which is deployed independently of mimetic space. In **"New Paintings"**, eight new large paintings are shown they were developed out of Yuskavage's series of **"Symbiotic"** portraits from the early 2000s in which two women were paired to invoke a sense of a dual manifestation of a single personality. In **"Home"** (2018), a dilapidated barnyard door complicates an otherwise serene interior, as if representing a gateway between the conscious and unconscious mind, a recurring dichotomy within the artist's oeuvre. A conflicted atmosphere is suggested in **"Golden God"** (2018) in which a pale woman is draped over the shoulders of a man who emerges from the same opaque yellow and violet hues as the background. While the transparent orb around his neck evokes the iconography of religious figures, here it seems to occupy a bridge between real and imaginary worlds. The work can be seen as a variation on the Death and the Maiden theme which recurs within many of Yuskavage's symbiotic portraits and underscores a parasitical, rather than mutualistic dynamic.

Info: David Zwirner Gallery, 533 West 19th Street, New York (Babie Brood: Small Paintings 1985–2018) and David Zwirner Gallery, 34 East 69th Street, New York (New Paintings), Duration: 8/11-15/12/18, Days & Hours: Tue-Sat 10:00-18:00, www.davidzwirner.com



Lisa Yuskavage, *Little Outskirts*, 2010-2011, Oil on linen, Diptych Each: 25.7 x 20.3 cm)
Overall: 25.7 x 41 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery



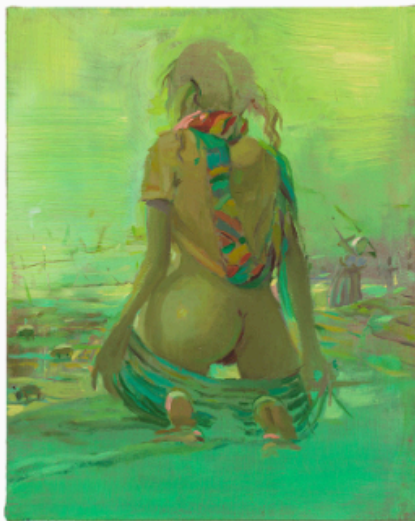
Lisa Yuskavage, Talia Reclining, 2000, Oil on pane, 12.7 x 15.2 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery



Lisa Yuskavage, The Tongue Tondo, 2018, Oil on linen, Diameter: 91.4 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery



Lisa Yuskavage, *Hudson Sunset (Coral & Grey)*, 1997, Oil on canvas board, 15.2 x 20 cm,
© Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery



Left: Lisa Yuskavage, *Striped Scarf*, 2013, Oil on linen, 25.4 x 20.3 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage,
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery. Right: Lisa Yuskavage, *Self Portrait*, 2017,
Oil on linen, 196.2 x 157.5 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner
Gallery



Left: Lisa Yuskavage, *Stoned*, 2016, Oil and graphite on linen, 42.2 x 40 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery. Right: Lisa Yuskavage, *Couple in Bed*, 2017, Oil on linen, 195.9 x 178.1 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery



Left: Lisa Yuskavage, *A Little Déjà Vu*, 2017-2018, Oil on linen, 38.1 x 32.1 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery. Right: Lisa Yuskavage, *Bedheads*, 2018, Oil on linen, 196.5 x 157.8 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery

David Zwirner



Left: Lisa Yuskavage, *Golden Couple*, 2018, Oil on linen, 195.9 x 177.8 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery. Right: Lisa Yuskavage, *Home*, 2018, Oil on linen, 203.2 x 203.2 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery



Left: Lisa Yuskavage, *Single White Female*, 2018, Oil on linen, 122.6 x 110.5 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery. Right: Lisa Yuskavage, *Golden God*, 2018, Oil on linen, 122.6 x 101.9 cm, © Lisa Yuskavage, Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery