



suzanne  
hudson

# painting now

Thames & Hudson



L I M I T E D   E D I T I O N

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*Catalogue coordinated by Katherine Thorpe*

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**painting  
now**

For Lisa,  
With profound admiration,  
affection, and pleasure.

Yours fondly,  
Suzanne

March 2015, NYC

On the jacket:

Front: Kehinde Wiley, *The Virgin Martyr St. Cecilia* (detail), 2008. Oil on canvas, 257.8 × 575.3 cm (101½ × 226½ in.). Courtesy the artist and Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, CA; Sean Kelly, New York; Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris; and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. © Kehinde Wiley. Used by permission.  
Back: Ian Davenport, *Puddle Painting: Dark Grey (after Uccello)* (detail), 2010. Acrylic on aluminum mounted on aluminum frame, 148 × 128 cm (58¼ × 50½ in.). Courtesy Waddington Custot Galleries, London. Photo Prudence Cuming Associates, London. © Ian Davenport. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2015.

All the illustrations in the visual introduction on pp. 2–18 can be found inside the book: see pp. 125, 201, 121, 137, 195, 88, 199, 39, 122, 62, 84, 163, 136, 104, 31, 57, and 84.

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can turn into a dense and almost illegible thicket of form. For Shahzia Sikander also (b.1969, Lahore, Pakistan), the stylized, highly technical Indian and Persian miniature painting that formed the basis of her studies at the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan—a school founded in the nineteenth century by Lockwood Kipling, father of *The Jungle Book* author Rudyard Kipling, to train local artists—provides the foundation for her work, which juxtaposes Hindu and Muslim iconography, and has included performances exploring issues of cultural stereotypes and dislocation. (One such piece entailed Sikander wearing a veil in public, something that she did not do prior to living in the US.) In her paintings, murals, digital animations, and installations—like that exhibited in the 2013 Sharjah Biennial in the United Arab Emirates, based on the silhouettes formed by the stylized hairstyle of worshippers of the Hindu god Krishna—Sikander emphasizes the effects of larger ideological structures, whether the imperial legacy bequeathed to a region or the inherited history of an art form. Similarly self-referential in his use of traditional paper scrolls, Ha Manh Thang (b.1980, Thai Nguyen, Vietnam) depicts himself and his girlfriend on Vietnamese chairs, but wearing sunglasses and with cosmetic bottles arranged behind her.

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Lest this wielding of skill as a mechanism for critiquing traditional cultural values is seen as only happening outside the West, Lisa Yuskavage (b.1962, Philadelphia, PA), John Currin (b.1962, Boulder, CO), and Will Cotton (b.1965, Melrose, MA) are similarly invested in upholding painting as a site of expertise for other ends. Though capable of painting photo-realistically, they tend to distort reality, mixing technical facility with risqué subject matter. But their facility in creating compositions, modeling forms, building up glazes, or varnishing a surface confuses when used to depict figures with bulbous protrusions, nudes fondling one another, or sugary landscapes, and raises the question, also broached by Shaw and Kelley, Dunham and Madani, of whether transgressions of taste are more disturbing than sexual deviation.

Yuskavage's coupling of technical mastery with anatomical boldness results in pneumatic female nudes, who despite their over-developed breasts and swollen abdomens, resemble pubescent, doe-eyed children. Carefree in their self-absorption—so total that they grope themselves unselfconsciously or spread their legs with abandon—her characters populate homey interiors or quixotic theatrical landscapes. But for all Yuskavage's attention to detail, the scenes do not proffer resolved narratives, perhaps tempting viewers to impose their own moral judgment. Implicit in her portrayals is the issue of whether making women available to the gaze promotes lasciviousness, and whether we, as spectator, become complicit in this process, which might more accurately be



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**Carroll Dunham**

*(Hers) Night and Day #1* 2009

Acrylic on canvas, 129.5 × 167.6 cm  
(51 × 66 in.); framed 136.5 × 174.6 cm  
(53¾ × 68¾ in.)

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**Tala Madani**

*Waterworld*, 2008

Oil on canvas, 40.6 × 30.5 cm  
(16 × 12 in.)



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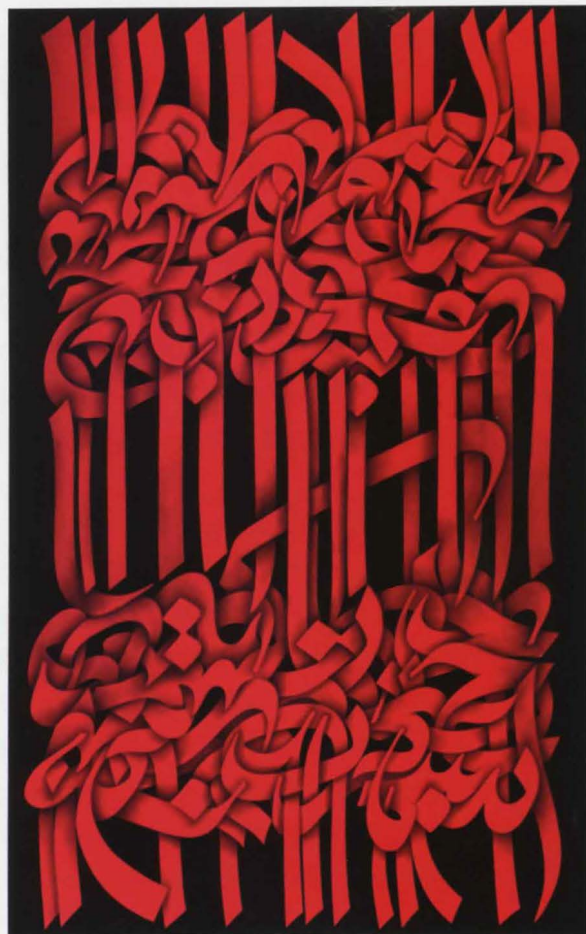
**Tsherin Sherpa**  
*Peace Out*, 2013  
 Gold leaf, acrylic, and ink on paper  
 56 × 56 cm (22 × 22 in.)



2.22

**Dedron**  
*Down Below the Snow Mountain*, 2009  
 Mineral pigments on Tibetan paper  
 54 × 38 cm (21 × 15 in.)

2.23



**Mohammad Ehsai**  
*Loving Whisper*, 1973-2008, 2008  
 Oil on canvas, 300 × 184.5 cm  
 (118 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 72 $\frac{5}{8}$  in.)



described as embarrassment in relation to bodily ideals. Her figures could also be seen in relation to the long history of representation of the female figure in art, so often stereotyped as saint or sinner, goddess or witch.

Yuskavage's classmate at Yale University, John Currin, shares her sympathy for the misshapen physiognomy that has become her trademark, though his strangely proportioned figures are more obviously deformed by a skewed formalism—the attempt to draw badly but paint perfectly—rather than just a cruel act of nature. This is despite his use of live models to flesh out scenes taken from pin-ups, mid-century films, stock photo catalogs, and Internet porn sites. His early works—anodyne yearbook-style faces that double as veiled self-portraits, sick girls languishing in bed, women with water-balloon breasts barely contained by tight sweaters, posing with or without significantly older male companions—raised objections which have been partly quelled by Currin's mastery of paint and flaunting of art historical sources: Old Master and Mannerist works were particularly important, as were those by Gustave Courbet and Norman Rockwell, among countless others.

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Currin's first show in 1992 elicited a now-infamous review in the *Village Voice*, urging readers to boycott it on account of its sexism. His exhibition at Gagosian Gallery, New York, in 2006, only furthered the cause when he titled several scenes of group intercourse after Northern European cities—Rotterdam, Copenhagen, Malmö—designating the nationality of the nudes. He has since pulled back from these prurient fantasies. As with some of his paintings from the late 1990s and early 2000s, which depict such subjects as women preparing a Thanksgiving turkey and men making pasta, he has revisited the theme of bourgeois satire.

Although in 2009 Will Cotton produced a number of paintings based on Thomas Cole's epic cycle of allegorical landscapes, *The Course of Empire* (1833–36), his work has tended to trumpet a kind of amorality unburdened by affairs of state. In 1996 he built an arrangement of foodstuffs in his studio, from which he constructed excessive painted worlds of molten chocolate, mountains of cake, peppermint hedges, and lollipop trees, then conflated this cornucopia of gastronomic desire with other fleshly pleasures by introducing lanky female models, sometimes posing supine, like languid salon nudes, on cotton-candy clouds. Because the items decay so quickly, Cotton bases his works on digital videos of maquettes. More recently, he has expanded this culinary conceit, fusing notions of gastronomic and aesthetic taste further by producing saccharine portraits of women wearing meringue and other candy headdresses. Cotton names the pop singer Katy Perry as a muse, for whom he

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**Lisa Yuskavage**  
*Pie Face*, 2008  
 Oil on linen, 121.9 × 102.2 × 5.1 cm  
 (48 × 40¼ × 2 in.)



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**John Currin**  
*Hot Pants*, 2010  
 Oil on canvas, 198.1 × 152.4 cm  
 (78 × 60 in.)