



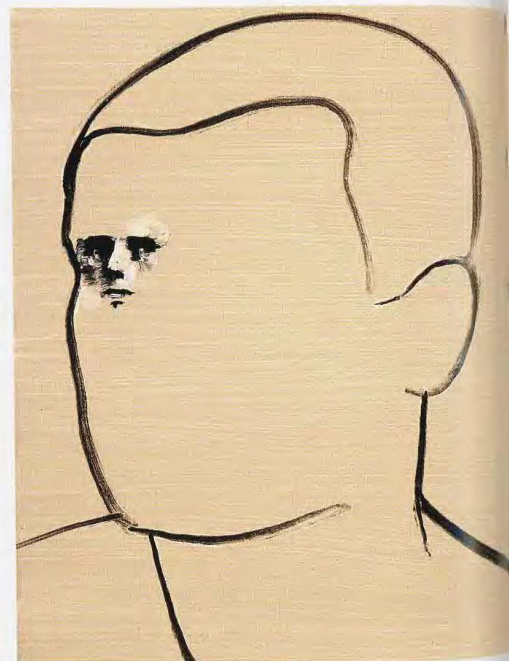
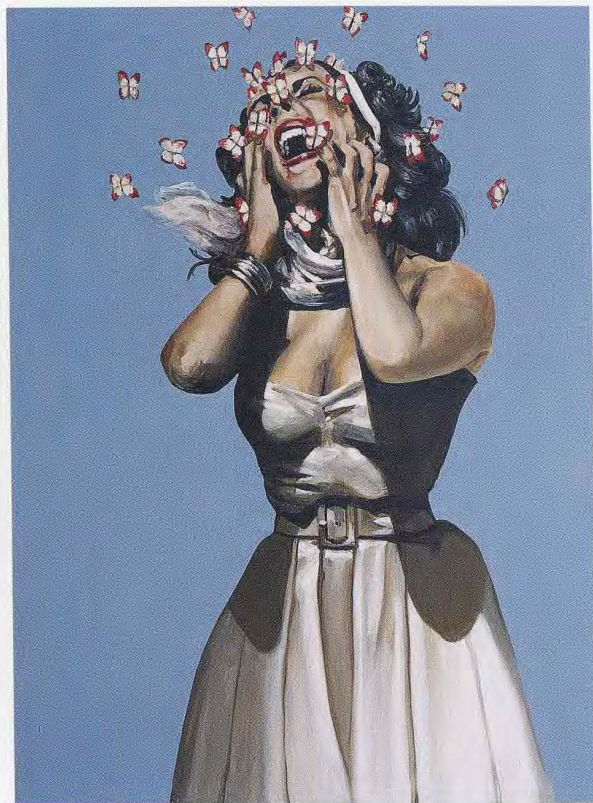
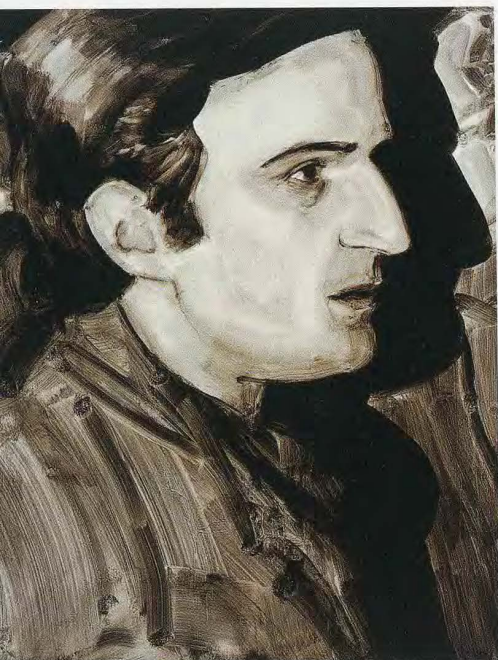
Painting People  
*figure painting today*



Frontispiece

**James Rielly**

*I looked at him, he looked back at me, 2004*



**Elizabeth Peyton**

*Truffaut at the Cinémathèque, 1968*

*(François Truffaut), 2005 [left]*

**Dawn Mellor**

*Elizabeth Taylor, 2002 [centre]*

**Wilhelm Sasnal**

*Untitled, 2004 [right]*

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# 1 The Figure Unravelled

| CHUCK CLOSE |

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| MIKA KATO |

| PHILIP AKKERMANN |

| MARGHERITA MANZELLI |

| JENNY SAVILLE |

| CECILY BROWN |

| LUCIAN FREUD |

| LISA YUSKAVAGE |

| CHANTAL JOFFE |

| NICOLA TYSON |

| MARLENE DUMAS |

| YAN PEI-MING |

| MARI SUNNA |

| BARNABY FURNAS |

| REZI VAN LANKVELD |

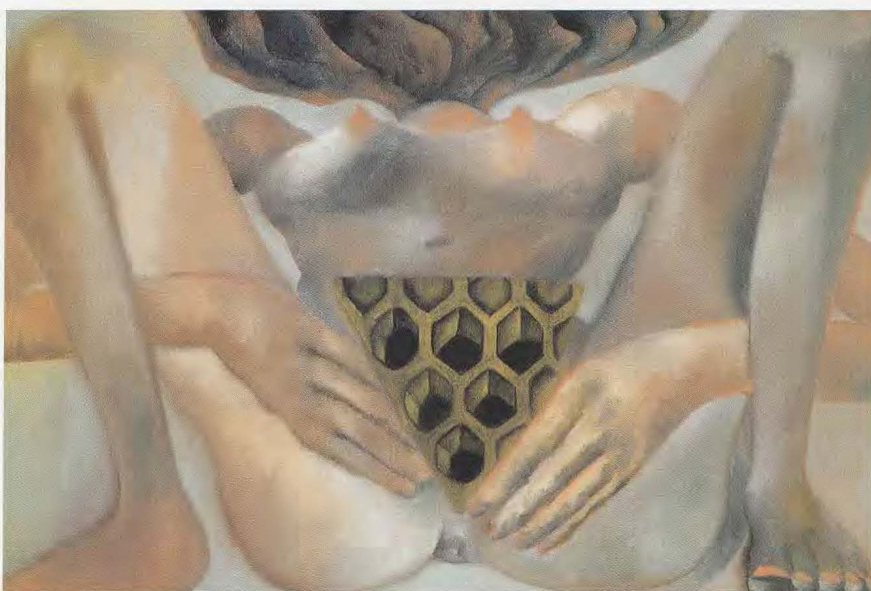
Lucian Freud is the most influential figure painter of his generation. Born in Berlin in 1922, he came to England in 1933 – he still paints from his top floor studio in Paddington, London. The studio has seen famous sitters such as Kate Moss sprawl across its tattered sofas, illuminated by an overhead lightbulb that casts harsh shadows under bent arms and legs and tints the skin like a yellowing bruise. Freud's early paintings show each person luminously painted, every hair delineated, large glassy eyes reflecting innocence and fear. They have an other-worldly naïvete to them, and are now influencing many of the artists looked at in Chapter 4. But Freud's style continued to develop over the decades and his figures are now encrusted with granular paint, their skin rubbed raw by the paintbrush. His nudes are not nudes in the tradition of, say, Titian or Rubens – buffed folds of suggestive flesh soft like ripe peaches – but are brutally honest depictions of naked bodies shown for what they are.

Although Freud has always painted in a figurative style, his work is as far removed from a photographic likeness as you could imagine. He works from life, each painted figure the distillation of his observations from sometimes hundreds of sittings. He uses paint as if it were the building blocks of life, creating each figure on canvas by constructing them out of facets of grey and ochre and veridian and vermillion. Unlike a photograph, in which every element of the subject represented is necessarily given equal weight by the freeze-frame flattening of it, Freud's paintings are subjectively composed with more attention paid to things that interest him. A foot is bigger than a head; male genitals and female faces are swollen and sanguine. The perspective of the sparsely furnished studio changes as he walks around the figure and consequently the room often appears off-kilter on the finished canvas. These works are painted

of her paintings. The figure is threatened by the energy of the process that has created it. Similarly in the work of Rezi van Lankveld, the figure is all but invisible as the process of painting – layers of paint poured over the canvas on the floor, the image suggesting itself – takes over. Her work fluctuates between abstraction and figuration as if you are looking at a Rorschach blot. A two-colour swirl of paint momentarily coalesces into a naked couple only to dissolve into a pool of paint once more.

Van Lankveld lets the paint dictate the subject. For Margherita Manzelli and Philip Akkerman, the subject leads. Both artists only use themselves as subject matter – in the case of Akkerman, this singular vision has been in operation for twenty-five years. By repeatedly painting themselves, they both explore how public identity, our persona, is created, how we present ourselves to the world in a variety of guises, and how we change throughout the days and years. Manzelli portrays herself against different backdrops that seem to dwarf her; Akkerman focuses solely on his head, at times wearing a hat, often without, a record of his emotions on each of the days he chooses to paint.

Yi Chen's work feeds into this exploration of identity in the way he builds up his meticulously painted faces using elements from magazines as his starting point. His faces are identikit, an alluring eye floating above a grimacing mouth. There is no single identity, but an amalgamation of many people, many visions of beauty. The face breaks down, and the viewer is left with the task of reconstructing it, like a plastic surgeon.



Francesco Clemente *Untitled*, 2003





Georg Baselitz *Der Schmuggler*, 2003

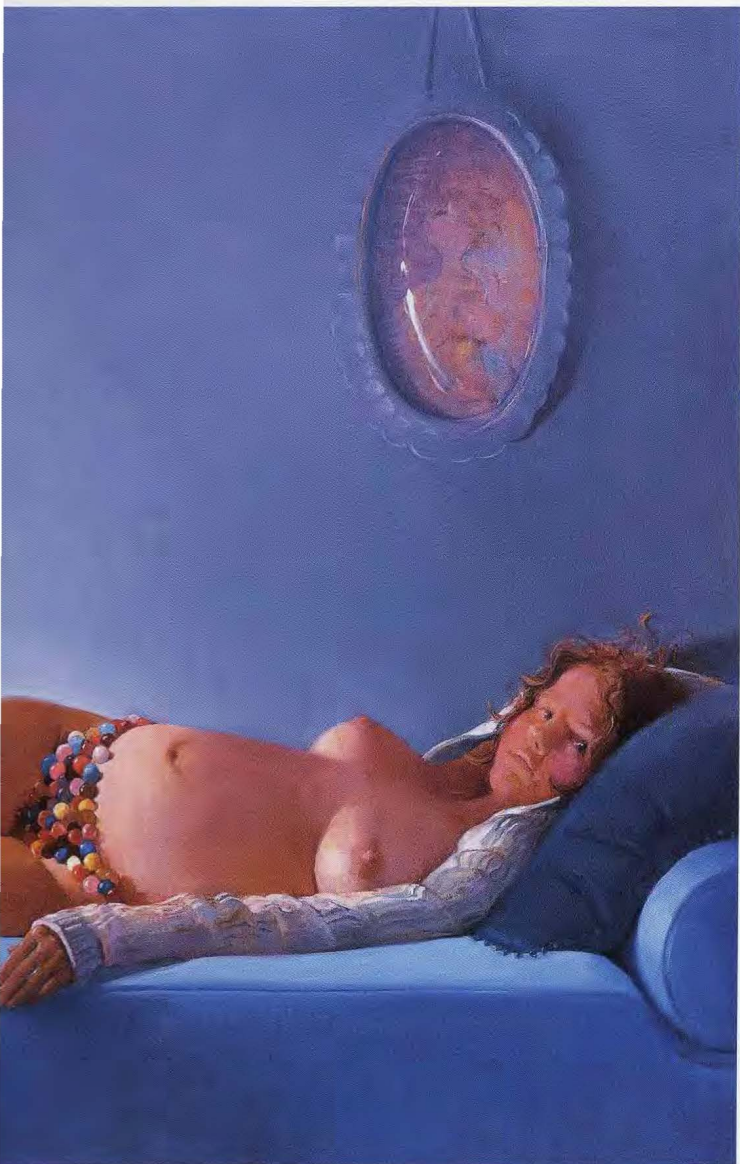
over time, and consequently time itself is captured in the accumulations of paint, in the shifts in perspective, in the physicality of the subject. And while Freud often paints recognizable people it is rare that their identity becomes more important than the direct communication that his works achieve about what it is to paint flesh.

Freud continues to push his work in new directions, as *The Artist Surprised by a Naked Admirer*, 2005, reveals, with its complex psychological narrative. And his work continues to influence many other artists who paint the figure, from Cecily Brown and Yan Pei-Ming to Jenny Saville. Saville made a name for herself – as Freud did – straight out of college in the early 1990s, and her monumental early nudes, based on her own body, raise questions about what it is to paint a naked woman, the imperfections of beauty and the realities of flesh. Her painting style has always been muscular and tempestuous, and in her latest large-scale heads its sheer energy threatens to rip apart the subject. Only the eyes of each person remain in stasis, deep pools of tawny-brown or grey, that somehow draw you into them as if they were the eye of a hurricane.

Lisa Yuskavage similarly paints naked women, but in contrast her style is soft-edged, her well-endowed fantasy blondes generously lit and posed. But they also raise questions about the iconography of painting women, particularly the tradition of male painters painting female nudes in recumbent, provocative poses. Yuskavage's women replicate those frequently seen in porn magazines, their physique on first impression matching the stereotyped bleached-blonde bimbo. But these women are painted by a woman, and at second glance, their bored glazed eyes and unaroused nipples imply they are simply going through the motions. (Other artists in this chapter – from Marlene Dumas to Chantal Joffe and Mika Kato – raise further questions about gender and stereotypes.)

The physicality of Freud's later paintings is absent in the work of Yuskavage, but it is present in the work of Yan Pei-Ming and Cecily Brown. In their paintings, as in the energetic faces of Saville, the figure is in danger of flying apart as the paint is whipped into an effervescent lather. In Pei-Ming's reworking of centrefold images, and Brown's naked couples in the landscape, the energy of the paint's application effectively becomes the subject. For Brown, the paint reinforces the physicality hinted at by the confusion of limbs that can just be made out in many





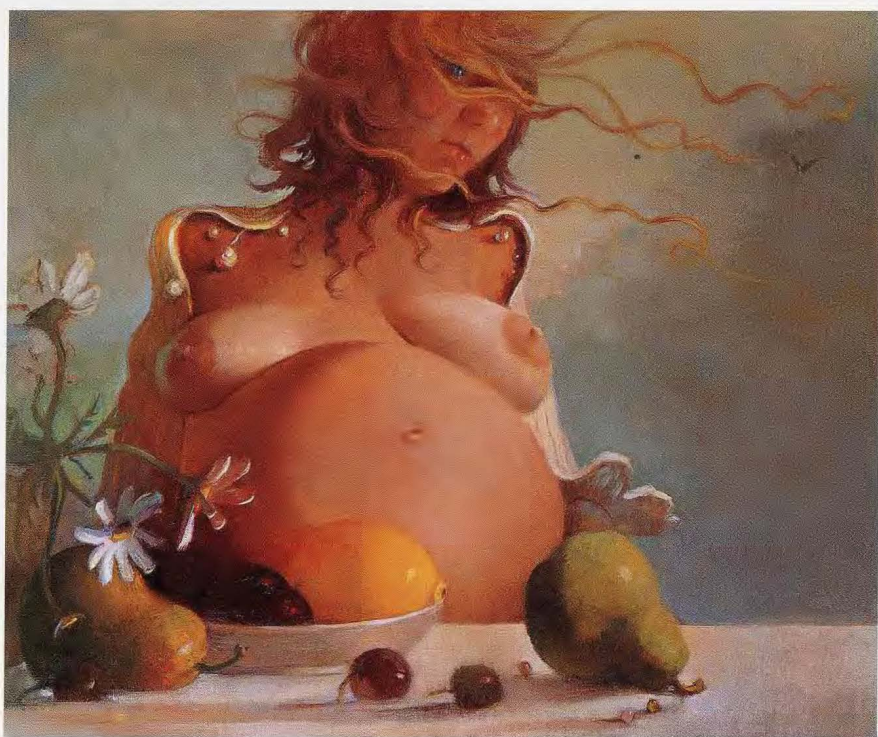
**Lisa Yuskavage**

*Couch*, 2003 [left]

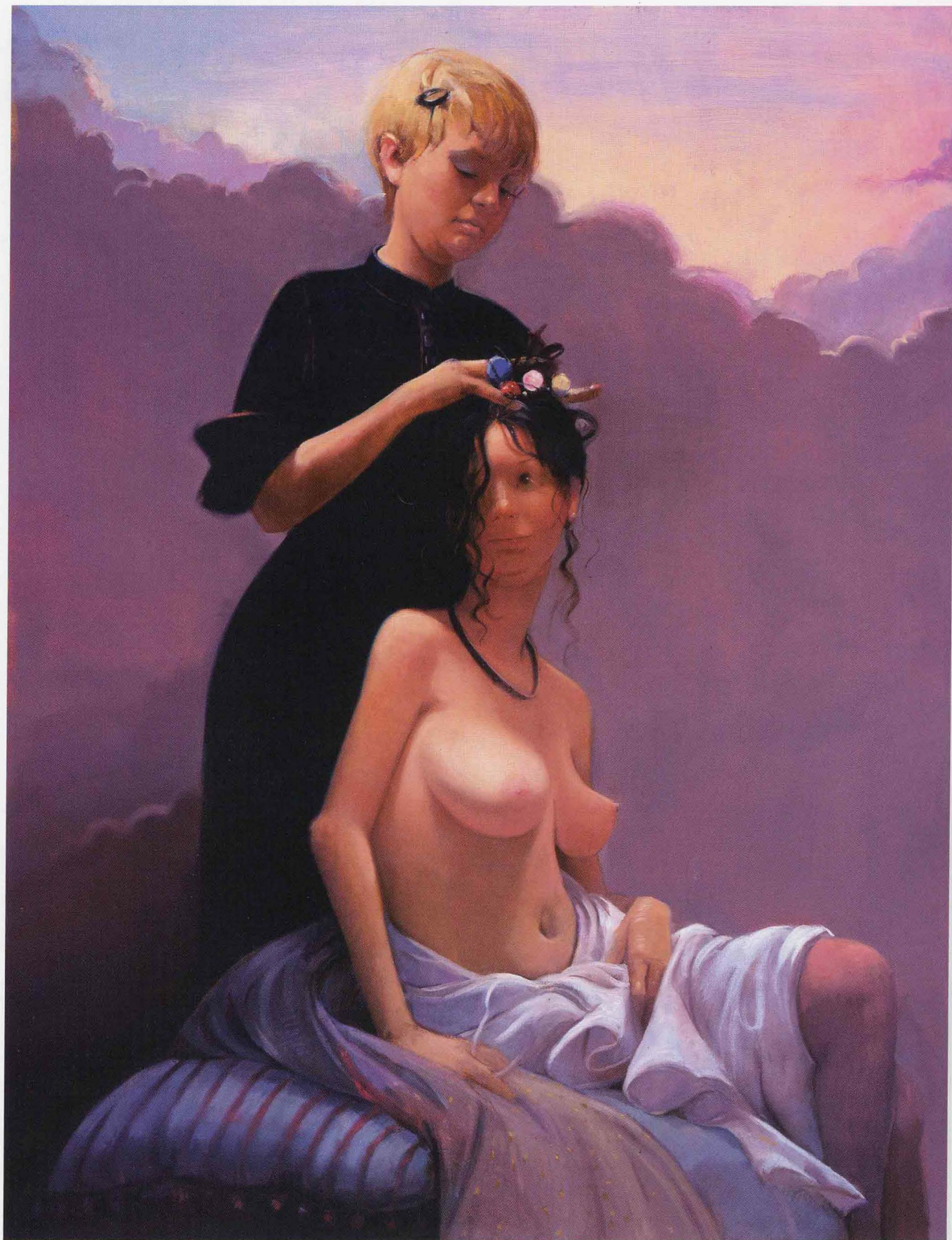
*Still Life*, 2003 [below]

*Grooming*, 2003 [opposite]

Yuskavage has always been seen as a controversial painter. She paints female nudes, their curves and breasts exaggerated, who passively await your gaze as they preen and pose languorously on the canvas. Yuskavage is a very adept painter — works like *Grooming* verge on the academic — and she makes overt references to historic nudes such as Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, whose pose is imprinted on the fecund teenager in *Couch*. She also makes use of devices first seen in the Renaissance in the work of Cranach, such as adorning her nudes with necklaces and translucent jackets to emphasize their nakedness. But all this rubs people up the wrong way; many male critics feel uneasy with her parody of art historical nudity and the male obsession with the female form as object — somehow it's not soft-porn dressed as art when a woman paints it, but simply porn. And female critics often think she crudely exploits her own sex and has hampered feminism.









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Born 1958, Mortsels, Belgium  
 Lives Antwerp, Belgium  
 Sint-Lukasinstituut, Brussels, Belgium, 1997-79  
 Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Visuels de la  
 Cambre, Brussels, Belgium, 1979-80

### Select solo shows

2005 Compton Verney House Trust, Warwickshire  
 Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp  
 2004 Tate Modern, London (touring to Düsseldorf)  
 Museo Tamayo, Mexico City  
 2003 Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover  
 Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich  
 Kunstmuseum, St Gallen  
 Helsinki Kunsthalle, Helsinki  
 2002 Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp  
 2001 White Cube, London  
 Belgian Pavilion, Venice Biennale, Venice

### Select bibliography

2005 Saltz, J., 'The Richter Resolution',  
*Modern Painters*, Apr  
 2004 Drolet, O., 'Luc Tuymans: The Truth  
 of the Matter' *Flash Art*, no. 235, Mar/Apr  
 Mullins, C., 'Canvassing Opinion',  
*The Financial Times*, 22 May  
 Tuymans, L., 'Adrian Searle, Pauline  
 Olowska, Peter Doig and Chris Ofili talk  
 about Luc Tuymans', *Tate Etc.*, no. 1, Summer  
 2003 Smith, R., 'Luc Tuymans' *The New  
 York Times* 9 May  
 2001 Birnbaum, D., 'More is Less', *Artforum*, Sept  
 Herbert, M., 'Luc Tuymans', *Tema Celeste* Nov/Dec

## Contact

Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium  
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 MA Central Saint Martins College of Art and  
 Design, London, England, 1989  
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 Design, London 1980-81 and Chelsea School  
 of Art, London, England, 1979-80

### Select solo shows

2005, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin  
 Sadie Coles HQ, London  
 Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York  
 2003 Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York  
 Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris  
 2002 Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York  
 2001 Galeria Camargo Vilaca, Sao Paulo

### Select bibliography

2005 Searle, A., *Nicola Tyson*, Douglas Hyde Gallery,  
 Dublin and Sadie Coles HQ, London

2004 Grassner, H., 'Preface', *Moving energies # 02 1*,  
 Museum Folkwang, Essen  
 2002 Cotter, H., 'Nicola Tyson', *The New York  
 Times*, 24 May, p. E37  
 2001 Krajewski, S., 'Extended Review: Blurry  
 Lines, John Michael Kohler Center for the Arts',  
*New Art Examiner*, Mar, p. 47

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Born 1971, London, England  
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 BA Winchester School of Arts, Winchester,  
 England, 1995  
 MA Chelsea School of Art, London, England, 1996

### Select solo shows

2005 Salon 94, New York  
 2004 MW Projects, London

### Select bibliography

2005 Smith, R., 'Making An Entrance At Any Age',  
*The New York Times*, 6 May, pp. 26-7  
 Mulholland, N., 'Expander', *Frieze*, no. 88,  
 Jan/Feb, p. 125  
 2004 Coomer, M., 'Unpeacable Kingdom: MW  
 Projects', *Time Out London*, 26 May-2 Jun, p. 50  
 2003 O'Reilly, S., 'Selected Paintings', *Frieze*,  
 no. 79, Nov, pp. 105-6  
 2002 Guner, F., 'Guns and Roses',  
*Metro*, 10 Jul, p. 1

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Max Wigram Gallery, London, England  
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## I MATHEW WEIR I ► 166

Born 1977, Ipswich, England  
 Lives London, England  
 MA Royal College of Art, London, England,  
 2002-04  
 BA Hons Fine Art Winchester School of Art,  
 Winchester, England, 1995-96

### Select solo shows

2005 Emily Tsingou Gallery, London  
 2004 Roberts & Tilton, Los Angeles

### Select bibliography

2005 Coomer, M., 'A Violet from Mother's Grave',  
*Time Out*, 27 Jul-3 Aug  
 Searle, A., 'Don't Look Now', *The Guardian*, 18 Jul  
 Morton, T., 'Mathew Weir', *Frieze*, May  
 2004 Burnett, C., 'Breaking God's Heart',  
*Frieze*, Mar  
 Vincent, M., 'Bloomberg New Contemporaries',  
*Art Monthly*, Sept  
 Charlesworth, J. J., 'Fever: New Painting in  
 London', *Flash Art*, Nov/Dec

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[www.emilytsingougallery.com](http://www.emilytsingougallery.com)

## I ZHANG XIAOGANG I ► 160

Born 1958, Kunming, Yunnan province, China  
 Lives Beijing, China  
 BA Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, Chongqing,  
 China, 1982

### Select solo shows

2004 Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong  
 2000 Max Protetch Gallery, New York

### Select bibliography

2005 Barboza, D., 'A Chinese Painter's  
 New Struggle: To Meet Demand', *The New  
 York Times*, 31 Aug  
 2001 Lovelace, C., 'Xiaogang at Max Protetch',  
*Art in America*, 1 Mar

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Born 1962, Philadelphia, USA  
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 MFA Yale School of Art, New Haven, USA, 1986  
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 Philadelphia, USA, 1984

### Select solo shows

2004 Greengrassi, London  
 2003 Marianne Boesky, New York  
 2002 Greengrassi (at The Galleries Show,  
 Royal Academy), London  
 2001 Studio Guenzani, Milan  
 Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva  
 Marianne Boesky, New York

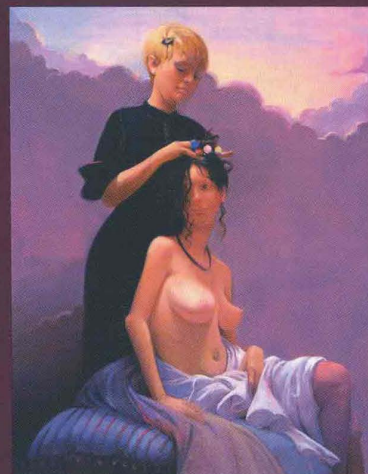
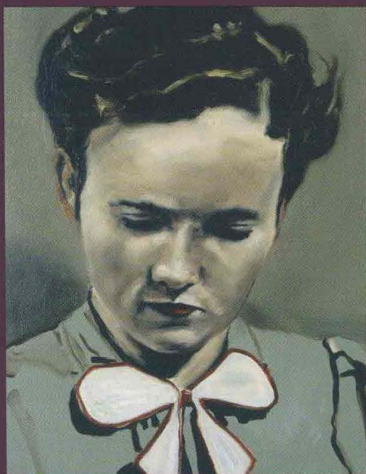
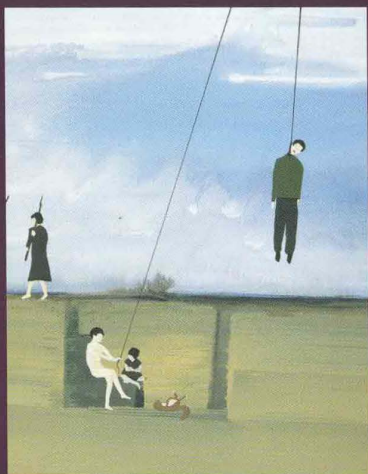
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2004 Higgin, J., 'Women on the Verge',  
*Frieze*, Oct  
 Kastner, J., 'Deviation standard: Jeffrey Kastner  
 on SITE Santa Fe', *Artforum*, May  
 Landi, A., 'Disturbing Beauty',  
*ARTnews*, Jan  
 2003 Boucher, B., 'Lisa Yuskavage',  
*Flash Art*, Oct  
 2002 Holmes, P., 'The Royal Treatment',  
*Art and Auction*, Oct  
 Smiley, J., 'Just Like a Woman',  
*Harper's Bazaar*, Jan  
 2001 Lovelace, C., 'Lisa Yuskavage: Fleshed Out',  
*Art in America*, Jul, p. 80-5  
 Gilmore, J., 'Lisa Yuskavage',  
*Tema Celeste*, Mar/Apr

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