

Heidi Zuckerman

Why Art Matters: The Bearable Lightness of Being

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For Lisa and Matvey,

Thank you for knowing
why Art Matters!



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As women, we are conditioned to think we need to act in a way that makes other people comfortable. That often includes making ourselves smaller. Whose idea was that? I have learned that no one should need to make someone else feel small to make themselves feel big. Among the wisdom and advice of Ezinma, the classical violinist, is: "You are the boss. So act like it." We really don't have to be, do, or think anything because someone else wants or (we feel) needs us to.

Perhaps the most courageous, least apologetic artist I know is Lisa Yuskavage. She creates paintings with the skill of an Old Master and the mind of an empowered contemporary woman who owns the power of the female form in all its grace. Her figures often look back at viewers, simultaneously inviting and challenging the gaze and feelings that the looking invokes. More than anything, though, Yuskavage makes sure her figures are seen.

Colophon

Written between March 2020 and September 2023, this publication is a testament to the museum's commitment to ensuring that everyone is welcome and that art is accessible and available to all. First and foremost, I would like to thank my colleagues at OCMA—Chief Curator, Courtenay Finn; Assistant Curator, Ziyi Duan; and Administrative Coordinator, CEO and Director's Office, Hadley Piper—for their invaluable assistance, enthusiasm, and commitment to this publication. The book was designed by Graphic Designer Parker Sprout, who captured the insight and energy of the project, and edited by Sarah Stephenson, whose sensitivity and understanding have been instrumental to the publication.

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My personal thanks and eternal gratitude are for my family: Emerson, Oleana, and JP. You are my light.

—HZ

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Delving deep into the human condition by way of art, *Why Art Matters: The Bearable Lightness of Being* takes readers on a thought-provoking journey into what it means to connect not only to the world around us but also, more specifically, to different works of art. The book can be used as a reference guide—with chapters covering essential, meaningful subjects such as perseverance, the unknown, imperfection, and ritual—and draws on a range of artworks to reflect on the idiosyncrasies of human life. Each entry centers on a single piece of art or artist and maps out different ways to approach the work while also offering insight into how we can bring our best selves to life.