

LISA YUSKAVAGE  
BOESKY & CALLERY

There is a paradox at the heart of Lisa Yuskavage's paintings of sinister and precocious nymphets, their polished faces and infibulated mouths forever puckered in a parody of seduction. In her most recent body of work she presented several large *ménage à trois* scenes where her characters — who are simultaneously good and bad, naughty and nice — engaged in a dance of mutual arousal and alienation, of inane provocation and calculated innocence, neatly staking the ambiguity of the relationship between exploitation and arousal squarely in the heart of her work.

Pornography is re-deployed as a hollow mirror in Yuskavage's doll-like figures, which seek to surpass, through excess, the global stereotype of desire shaped by the likes of "Baywatch" and its diseased siblings. They are, like it or not, the fertility idols of our time, as inevitable as the *Venus* of Willendorf. The characters are shells, topological exercises, their availability a direct reflection of their emptiness, connecting all entrances and exits. The paintings are painted in the same way, a glossy, pseudo-ravishing, illustrational sheen deflects the gaze: all is surface in Yuskavage's harem. Her paint handling might be describing the inherent contradiction in trying to sort our feelings about mastery; just as the images reflect a deep rooted cultural division about the so-called "beauty myth." The bound foot becomes the silicon breast. Flared pants are back. Yesterday's genius is tomorrow's hack. There is a curious and touching self-eliminating nullity to Yuskavage's project. Her figures are confluents of the sad contradictions surrounding the clichés of sexual pleasure. This conflict between alienation and affection, between self-love and self-loathing is where her work is strongest; locked into a futile two-step of desire and desolation.

Yuskavage's position might well seem less tenable without the context of our particular critical climate, but since we are apparently trapped in exactly the same double-bind ourselves, her work bears a timely, if unpleasant, message.

Matthew Ritchie

NICOLE EISENMAN  
JACK TILTON

At the gallery entrance a cluster of cartoons offer fair warning that the art inside is grungy, self-absorbed, and poised on the edge of disastrous collapse. It is a huge mess of good and bad paintings, smudged drawings, ephemeral sculpture, and installations held together by the artist's creative energy.



Lisa Yuskavage, *Bad Habits*, 1996. Oil on linen, 84 x 72".



Nicole Eisenman, *Eisenman's Dream House (TV room)*, 1996. Collage on paper, 17 x 17 1/2".