

Lisa Yuskavage

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
Philadelphia
MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY
New York

Few painters have entertained, irritated, and baffled their viewers as much as Lisa Yuskavage has over the past five years. From her first solo show, with New York's Boesky and Callery gallery in 1996, when she showed her pungently titled group of cast Hydrocal figures, *Asspicking, foodeating, headshrinking, socialclimbing, mother-fucking bad habits* (1995), Yuskavage's sculptures and paintings of semiclad, *Penthouse*-endowed women have kept the art world guessing about her intentions. Is she appropriating or subverting the "male gaze," making a statement about the female condition, or simply reveling in the act of painting?

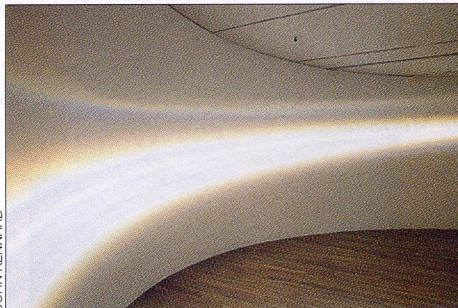
Clearly, the Institute of Contemporary Art, where Yuskavage's first retrospective was recently held, felt that its audience deserved help with the artist's work and produced a catalogue that offers insights into her strategies, working process, and art-historical sources (Giovanni Bellini, Thomas Hart Benton, Edgar Degas, Rembrandt, Philip Guston). The exhibition's installation emphasized the formal aspects of her paintings. Displayed with lots of space between them, paintings that used to seem shocking—and contributed to Yuskavage's "bad girl" status—such as *Interior: Big Blonde with Beaded Jacket* (1997) or *Day* (1999–2000), which was inspired by a *Penthouse* photograph but later reminded Yuskavage of the Degas monotype *Nude Woman Standing in a Bathtub* (ca. 1880–85), projected an unexpected dignity and pathos.

Still, Yuskavage's work continued to raise more questions than it answered, a condition she apparently encourages ("I am asking or daring the viewer, I suppose, to just look at it as a painted thing, as a kind of layered thing," Yuskavage sort of explains in an interview with the institute's director Claudia Gould, published in the catalogue). But she is not necessarily achieving her goals. In the same interview, Yuskavage cites an affinity with Guston—presumably with his late paintings—that her own work does not bear out. "His work is boundless and generous; it's as multilayered and woven as a Beethoven symphony," Yuskavage tells Gould, adding that she hates "stingy art." If so, then why are her paintings so deliberately drained of narrative and content, often relying on a single figure's pose, the odd piece of furniture, and sumptuous color and paint handling to relay meaning or emotion?

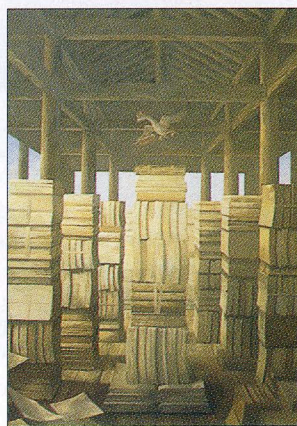
What Yuskavage's work appears to share more with Guston's late paintings is a sense of anger or despair, and that Gustonian bluntness is expressed more obviously in her Hydrocal sculptures, which, though smooth and pristine, have a feisty energy that



Lisa Yuskavage, *Day*, 1999–2000, oil on linen, 77" x 62". Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania.



Olafur Eliasson, *360-Degree Expectation*, 2001, halogen bulb and lighthouse lens, dimensions variable. Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.



Sungjoon Joh, *Confucian Altar*, 2001, oil on linen, 98" x 67". Nielsen.

her painted figures lack. It was interesting to see that Yuskavage's new paintings at Marianne Boesky have, in fact, become more generous. Here, instead of making hazy references to interior space, Yuskavage depicts her female figures seated in chairs in real rooms. They're still cartoony women, but they come off as stronger characters.

—Edith Newhall

Olafur Eliasson

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
Boston

For his first East Coast solo museum exhibition, Olafur Eliasson transformed Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art into a construction site—the antithesis of the white cube. The huge stairway jutting up through the building's center was surrounded by massive scaffolding that supported a temporary fourth floor—situated two feet above the third and accessible through a narrow stairwell. Eliasson flooded this space with three-inch-deep water. Gently illuminated by overhead concentric lights that turned on and off above the surface of the water, *Neonripple*, as the work is titled, suggested waves radiating from a tossed stone.

Born in Copenhagen and based in Berlin, Eliasson spends part of the year in Iceland, and draws on his experiences there for his installations, sculptures, and photographs.

He usually uses simple means to achieve his effects. For his *360-Degree Expectation*, Eliasson choreographed the mesmerizing effect of light from a distant horizon with nothing more than a halogen bulb and a lighthouse lens set inside a circular room. Characteristically exposing the artifice of his illusions, he left the supporting studs in the walls uncovered.

Eliasson's struggle to create art experiences instead of art objects links his work with James Turrell's efforts to use natural phenomena such as light as his artistic media. But unlike Turrell, Eliasson reveals the means he uses to create illusions. His pieces make you aware that everything is a matter of perception and that, according to his title for this show, "your only real thing is time."

—Mary Sherman

Sungjoon Joh

NIELSEN
Boston

Sungjoon Joh brings a contemporary sensibility to the Korean tradition of *ch'aekkori*—a late-19th-century form of painting in which books and bookcases are depicted on screens. It was meant to honor the life of the mind by portraying the tools of scholarship. For Joh, a Korean-born artist who now lives and works in New York, the oil-and-linen paintings of books refer not only to intellectual endeavors but also to modernist grids—structures on which to hang ideas about color, light, and form.