

art

That Girl

Lisa Yuskavage

Boesky & Callery Fine Arts
51 Greene Street
Through November 16

Lisa Yuskavage's paintings of female fleshiness have been getting people's goats of late. The women in them are nightmarish caricatures of zaftig sexuality, butts and boobs exaggerated—half inflatable sex dolls, half fertility idols. With their bizarre, masklike faces poking out of theatrically atmospheric grounds, and names like *Wee Asspicker*, it's tempting to stamp them misogynist and be done with it. Considering the harsh criticism John Currin has received for his busty gals, could Yuskavage's license as a fleshy woman let her get away with it?

When people react to these paintings as an assault, it may have to do with the paintings' Rorschachian ability to reveal hidden truths about the viewer. Regarding sexuality, we are two. We have our highly evolved cerebral selves that have digested Judith Butler and that analytically and maturely work through issues of sexuality. And we have our lower, reptilian brains, where nasty fantasies and puerile emotions hide.

That is where Yuskavage gets us; straight guys see themselves revealed as drooling doggie-dicks by her interpretation of their fantasies, gay guys as potential vaginaphobes. Women gay and straight come face to face with the way their fleshiness looks in the mirror after a hard night, and the breast-augmentation troops are confronted by silicon boobs returning as nightmares.

Yuskavage defies neat pigeonholing. She treats her handcrafted sex-bomb models, displayed here as white Hydrocal sculptures, with affection and identification. And she has the painting chops to back it up, overwhelming us with a rush of Douglas Sirk colors. I've never been able to convince Yuskavage haters (and there are many) of the value of her work, but I always wonder what secret nerve of theirs she hits. We all have bodies and we all have libidos.

—BILL ARNING

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