

BEHIND THE CURVES

There's only one thing the art world likes better than attractive, young female artists: attractive, young female artists obsessed with sex. Cecily Brown's thick 'n' sticky paintings of writhing flesh, Sue Williams' suggestive abstract expressionism, Sam Taylor-Wood's photographic series of a bored, orgiastic elite—all have been making the critics and the collectors swoon. But the undeniable soror in charge is a thirty-seven-year-old truck driver's daughter from Philadelphia named Lisa Yuskavage. Her first solo museum exhibition, opening this month at the Institute of Contemporary Art in her hometown, includes some large-scale paintings never before shown publicly in the United States. An oil painter of cartoonishly voluptuous nymphets—most half-hidden in hair and pastel mist, looking delicately, depressingly ravaged—Yuskavage is an artist who is just as likely to be found studying back issues of *Penthouse* as the rococo work of eighteenth-century French painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard. The way she sees it, the magazine's softcore porn spreads, with their diffuse lighting, are very much like the work of Vermeer: lush, stimulating, with a view to an intimate world. —ALBERT LEE

