

Lisa Yuskavage

David Zwirner

519 West 19th Street, Chelsea

Through Nov. 5

Lisa Yuskavage makes beautiful paintings about the paradoxes of beauty, and she just keeps getting better at it. In an electric Rococo style, her new works picture her signature cartoonishly curvy, childlike women in sexually titillating postures in expansive, wilderness landscapes. With a bravura painterly touch and in luscious, luminous colors, she renders her pneumatic nymphets under spacious green and pink skies, conjuring a Never Never Land of erotic bliss far from the struggle and strife of modernity.

At the center of a triptych more than 18 feet wide, a naked femme lolls on a wooden bench with her nether parts facing the viewer in an invitation to enter the archaic feminine, both literally and metaphorically. Romantic yearning for immersion in beneficent nature, however, collides with satiric hilarity as Ms. Yuskavage toys outrageously with conventions of soft pornography. She dares viewers to admit to elemental desires and fantasies that the ideologically enlightened would deny.

Ms. Yuskavage's Edenic, sexualized landscapes really are battlegrounds of moral and spiritual war between judgmental mind and polymorphous id. In the triptych's middle distance stand about a half dozen severe-looking women in long dresses and buttoned-up blouses, forming, it seems, a chorus of disapprobation.

They might stand for those who would disavow sensual hedonism and the infantile consumerism it leads to — those who would put art to the service of critical intellect and political rectitude. But it is the tension in the paintings themselves between the elevated beauty of fine art and the debased, yet often hard-to-resist beauty of kitsch that gives Ms. Yuskavage's work its comical, uncannily seductive allure.

KEN JOHNSON