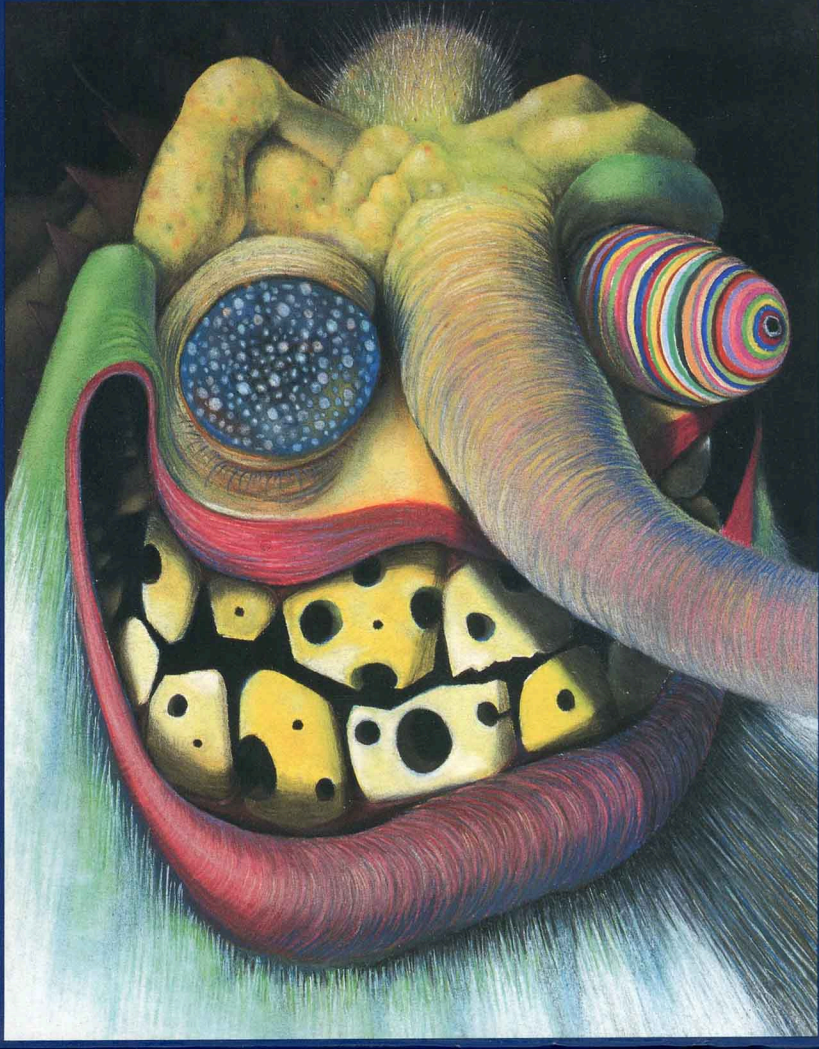


DISPARITIES & DEFORMATIONS OUR GROTESQUE
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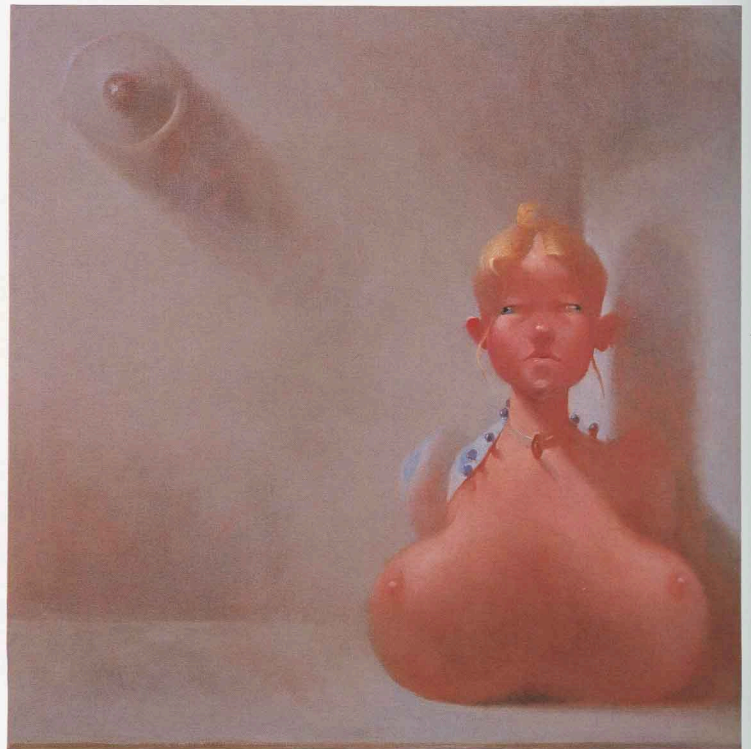
IN AN INTERVIEW SOME YEARS BACK the painter Neil Jenney once described the options available to an artist setting out to contravene accepted standards of quality in painting. The variables were: good drawing and bad painting; bad drawing and good painting; bad drawing and bad painting. A product of New York in the 1960s, Jenney's contrarian proposals were essentially formalist. Accordingly, he neglected to mention image. Most of his work involved playing words and pictures off against each other in a manner—also explored by Bruce Nauman, Jim Nutt, and many others—that might be called silly semiotics.

Lisa Yuskavage presents us with another possibility, or rather a further, and in some painterly respects, subtler break-down and recombination of categories of "good" and "bad." Trained at Yale when William Bailey held sway, she draws with classical control and paints the same way—in short, good-good. Yet unlike Bailey who imagines college coeds as Nymphs and Naiads wandering around well-appointed rooms, Yuskavage has generally favored plump nymphets and plus-sized women in situations tending toward track-housing plush and motel luxe. These upholstered settings and upholstered models have been the scene of, and accomplices to, a thorough-going burglary of traditional painting. Unlike vandals who break and enter with heavy tools and then ransack the premises, at every turn Yuskavage shows understanding of and respect for the things she makes off with. The elegant contours, full volumes, and lush transparencies of color and tone attest to hard-earned fluency in the learned languages of old masters from Jean-Honoré Fragonard and Jacques Louis David on down. But visual puns that equate the nipple of a wall molding with that of a bosomy "babe," or the decision to paste a smiley face on the head of a female figure in a diaphanous dress signal that Yuskavage intends to

honor tradition in the breach. To rescue good studio practice from the suffocating grip of middle-brow good taste, Yuskavage has pulled off an inside job and lavished the spoils on images many would have thought unworthy of such riches. In the beginning, the results were garish, cartoonish, and confrontational but deeply informed. Lately they have become nuanced, wistful, and yet remain inherently grotesque as if Nabakov's elegant satire of American mores was being retold by a full-figured Lolita who knew how to talk back.

OPPOSITE:
Smiley, 2003
Oil on linen
34 x 30 inches
Collection of
David Teiger

BELOW:
The Early Years,
1995
Oil on linen
36 x 36 inches
Collection of Donald
L. Bryant, Jr.





to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. In 2001, Wesley was given a retrospective at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, and a one-person exhibition: "John Wesley: Love's Lust" at the Fogg Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Wesley lives and works in New York.

FRANZ WEST

Franz West creates drawings, collages, sculptures, furniture, and installations that put a deft but seemingly makeshift facture at the service of a refined but eccentric formalist bent, a nuanced appreciation of classic modern art and design, and a gently mocking sense of humor. West was born in Vienna, Austria in 1947. In the 1960s, his mother gave him a workroom next to her dental surgery office where West accessed materials such as plaster, wire, cardboard, household paints, and bandages, that would become integral components of his work. In 1976, West then proceeded to an atelier at the Vienna Art Academy with the help of sculptor and instructor, Bruno Gironcoli, who also encouraged his interest in psychoanalysis. The artist had his first solo exhibitions in Vienna at the Galerie Hamburger in 1970 and subsequently at Galerie Nächst St. Stephan in 1977. West was chosen as the Austrian representative in the exhibition "Westkunst" at the Museum der Stadt in Cologne in 1981; his work was subsequently shown at Portikus, Frankfurt in 1988, and at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, 1989. Over the last two decades, he also participated in international group exhibitions such as the 1992 and 1997 Documentas, Kassel; the 1988 and 1990 Venice Biennales; and the 2000 Sydney Biennial. His work has also been included in exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1997, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1998. West has held solo exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1997; the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, 2001; and was given a retrospective at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London in 2003. West lives and works in Vienna.

LISA YUSKAVAGE

Lisa Yuskavage paints in a technically conservative style but what she paints—women in contemporary settings—and the ways in which she portrays them strategically violates most of the canons of good taste while challenging ideas about the roles these women are supposed to fill and the appearances they are supposed to present to society. Yuskavage was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1962. She earned a B.F.A. from the Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, in 1984 and a M.F.A. from the Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut, in 1986. Her first solo shows were held at the Pamela Auchincloss Gallery, New York, in 1990 and the Studio Guenzani, Milan, in 1993. Subsequently, Yuskavage has held solo shows at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2002; the Centre d'art contemporaine, Geneva, 2001; and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, 2000. Her paintings and works on paper have also been included in the 1999 Istanbul Biennial; the 2000 Whitney Biennial; the 2000 Corcoran Gallery of Art Biennial, Washington, D.C.; as well as group shows in Tokyo, Athens, Amsterdam, and Mexico City. Her photographs of supermodel Kate Moss appeared in the September 2003 issue of *W Magazine* as part of a portfolio project that also included works by the artists Chuck Close, Richard Prince, and Alex Katz. Yuskavage lives and works in New York and Rome.

*Artists' biographies compiled by
Daniel M. Belasco and Sarah Lewis.*

JOHN WESLEY**QE2**, 1994–95

Acrylic on canvas

37 x 54 inches

Courtesy of Fredericks Freiser Gallery, New York

Birthday, 1990

Acrylic on canvas

23 x 54 inches

Courtesy of Fredericks Freiser Gallery, New York

FRANZ WEST**Paßstück (Adaptive)**, 1970s/2003

Epoxy, wire

9 x 10³/₄ x 15³/₄ inches

Collection of the artist

Paßstück (Adaptive), 1970s/2003

Epoxy, wire

22⁷/₈ x 8⁵/₈ x 11¹/₂ inches

Collection of the artist

Paßstück (Adaptive), 1970s/2003

Epoxy, wire

6¹/₄ x 10¹/₂ x 7¹/₄ inches

Collection of the artist

Paßstück (Adaptive), 1970s/2003

Epoxy, wire

13³/₈ x 2¹/₂ x 11¹/₂ inches

Collection of the artist

Paßstück (Adaptive), 1970s/2003

Epoxy, wire

17³/₈ x 4³/₄ x 11¹/₂ inches

Collection of the artist

Paßstück (Adaptive), 1970s/2003

Epoxy, wire

26 x 14 x 8¹/₄ inches

Collection of the artist

Paßstück (Adaptive), 1970s/2003

Epoxy, wire

17¹/₂ x 18⁷/₈ x 20¹/₄ inches

Collection of the artist

LISA YUSKAVAGE**Smiley**, 2003

Oil on linen

34 x 30 inches

Collection of David Teiger

The Early Years, 1995

Oil on linen

36 x 36 inches

Collection of Donald L. Bryant, Jr.