

Lisa Yuskavage

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606 N Western Avenue, Los Angeles



Lisa Yuskavage, *Painter Painting*, 2024. © Lisa Yuskavage. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by artist Lisa Yuskavage, on view at the gallery's 606 N Western Avenue location in Los Angeles. This will be the artist's ninth solo exhibition with the gallery and her first in Los Angeles in thirty years.

One of the most original and influential artists of the past three decades, Yuskavage creates works that affirm the singularity of the medium of painting while challenging conventional understandings of genres and viewership. Her rich cast of characters and their varied attributes are layered within compositions built of both representational and abstract elements in which color and light are the primary vehicles of meaning.

On view will be both large and small-format paintings. Each painting is set within a fictionalized artist's studio in which the depicted spaces become stages where characters from Yuskavage's oeuvre are intertwined. As curator Helen Molesworth notes, "The paintings warp time, folding in and back in themselves spatially, like a wormhole that moves us forward and backward in time—the young girl, the older women, the painter and the painted—these paintings offer a complex history made up of personal iconography combined with a bevy of art historical allusions, meaning that nothing is exactly as it appears. Instead, there is constant vacillation. This is partly what paintings do, but, more specifically, it's absolutely what a Yuskavage painting does."¹

Painter Painting (2024), one of the new large-scale works in the exhibition, envisions a monumental grisaille in front of which an artist—a self-portrait of Yuskavage in a lab coat—is at work. The painting

¹ Helen Molesworth, message to Lisa Yuskavage, October 25, 2022.

within the scene is based on a black-and-white photograph that Yuskavage took in 1995 of one of her *Bad Habits* sculptural maquettes, "The Motherfucker." The sculptures began as a group of Sculpey clay figurines that the artist created in 1995 (later cast in Hydrocal as an editioned work in 1996) and they have subsequently appeared as subjects in many of her works, most notably from 1996 to 1999. Expanding the self-referential play within this studio narrative, Yuskavage includes a mimetic version of the original photograph, which is shown taped to the surface of the oversized grayscale painting. The *Bad Habits* sculpture itself is visible on a pedestal on the right side of the composition.

In *In the Company of Models* (2024), Yuskavage includes her seminal 1995 painting *Rorschach Blot*, which can be seen leaning against the wall at an angle amid other works in progress. Yuskavage contrasts the lemony-yellow surface of that work with a wall painted in minty greens from which materializes a figure, who is based on an image of her at nineteen years old as a model in art school. This figure's dress, painted in similar luminous greens, is reminiscent of the starched nightgown worn by the subject in Yuskavage's *Transference Portrait of My Shrink in Her Starched Nightgown with My Face and Her Hair* (1995), the pendant painting to *Rorschach Blot*. These paired works were first exhibited together at Yuskavage's 1996 solo exhibition at Christopher Grimes Gallery in Santa Monica—a nod to the artist's history in Los Angeles. Another imagined version of one of Yuskavage's *Bad Habits* sculptures is shown here in profile to the right of another of the artist's notable figurative motifs, a female nude in beaded panties.

In both *Painter Painting* and *In the Company of Models* as well as several other works in this exhibition, Yuskavage extends these meditations on the nature of her work and art making more broadly through the presence of arrays of monochromatic canvases that she frequently depicts propped up against each other in dense groupings. These monochromes at once reference color theory and the artist's own working process, in which she builds up her compositions from a solid ground, applying layers of paint to achieve the luminosity and distinctive color saturation that are hallmarks of her works.

This visual and narrative device is foregrounded in *Morning Classes in New Haven: In the Department of Color Theory* (2024), where a cascade of these empty canvases—rendered in cadmiums of all sort: yellows, golds, tangerines, and salmon pinks—proliferate next to two figures: a crouching model in front of an older model who is standing. Paradoxically, the cadmium-yellow light monochrome square at the front of the group is actually an exposed section of the overall underpainting. Behind the posing models is a large work in progress in jewellike green tones that seems to visually quote from several of the artist's works from the early 2010s, which show groups of disapproving peasants, or "Nel'zahs."

In addition to these and other larger paintings, the exhibition features a selection of new and recent smaller paintings. While some are directly related to their larger counterparts or sources of inspiration for the works in the show, others are one-of-a-kind compositions that exist only on an intimate scale. Notable among these new small-format works are two rare multipanel paintings: the diptych *Five Nudes a Painter and a Pieface* (2024) and the triptych *Endless Studio* (2024). As places for exploring color, form, and characters, these small paintings play a remarkably dynamic and protean role within Yuskavage's oeuvre, continuously inspiring new pictorial developments.

Born in Philadelphia in 1962, Lisa Yuskavage received her BFA from the Tyler School of Art and Architecture, Philadelphia, in 1984 and her MFA from the Yale School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut, in 1986. Since 2005, the artist's work has been represented by David Zwirner.

In June 2025, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, will host the first comprehensive museum presentation of Yuskavage's works on paper, featuring drawings from the early 1990s to the present, the majority of which have never been exhibited before.

Lisa Yuskavage: Wilderness was on view at the Aspen Art Museum in 2020 and the Baltimore Museum of Art in 2021. Other institutions that have featured notable solo exhibitions of the artist's work include the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (2000); Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (2001); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2006); The Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin (2011; organized as part of Dublin Contemporary 2011); and The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts (2015; traveled to Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, 2016).

Museum collections which hold works by the artist include the Art Institute of Chicago; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Rubell Museum, Miami; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Seattle Art Museum; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Yuskavage lives and works in New York.

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