

illumination, trees and framing architecture that give rise to this particular configuration, and, finding none, is a bit unsettled. (A funny characteristic of the installation is that it deflects the viewer's attention away from the painting itself.) Temple re-creates a visual experience—familiar to the point of being mundane—that the viewer is accustomed to seeing occur naturally. Depicting a phenomenon that is often subliminal, that we habitually filter out of our experience of interior space, her installations have been known literally to blend into the woodwork. The absence of any other elements in *Forest for the Sea* was startling, nervy and necessary.

McConnell's *Compound*, housed in a darkened enclosure off the main space, comprised two parts. The less flashy component involved three tapering coils of fiberglass insulation, in the bowels of which were planted glowing lightbulbs. Slightly spooky, the coils were clustered together like pods in a science-fiction movie. Through their tops they collectively cast on the low ceiling a soft, cottony pool of light, like a gathering storm cloud or the atmosphere of Venus. A few feet away was a stack nearly 6 feet tall of nested, bottomless plastic pails, their interiors apparently encrusted with left-over joint compound and similarly outfitted with incandescent bulbs. The stack projected a crisper, more legible image: the light traveling up its curling, loric length and through a hole cut in the top pail's lid was focused by a single eyeglass lens. By installing a curved panel that rounded the juncture of wall and ceiling, McConnell deftly complicated the space; the eccentric spotlight reached the panel looking something like the moon. In an inspired bit of tweaking, the artist shimmed the column of buckets ever so slightly with a broad putty knife, so that this moon was a few days past full. The suggestion of the lunar cycle chimed quietly with Temple's frozen, late-afternoon moment, which halted the earth's rotation.

—Stephen Maine

## Lisa Yuskavage at David Zwirner and Zwirner & Wirth

There is sometimes a very thin line separating high and low art—Thomas Kinkade's clotted English cottages aren't that far stylistically from John Constable's rustic English landscapes, while

LeRoy Neiman does a creditable imitation of certain aspects of Post-Impressionism. In Lisa Yuskavage's paintings, the line is drawn between a diverse pantheon of Western masters and the favored styles of those who may never have seen the inside of a major art museum. Echoes of Vermeer and Goya jostle against the spirit of calendar pinups

erotic. Others depict women who are not exactly alone either, as they are large with child. In those works, there is often a play on the implied fecundity of the traditional still life. In paintings such as *Brood* (2005-06) and *Biting the Red Thing* (2004-05), a woman's swollen breasts and enormous belly rest above arrangements of globular fruit. In the latter, the



Top, Mary Temple: *The Forest for the Sea*, 2006, latex on Sheetrock, 24 by 66 feet; bottom, Liza McConnell: *Compound*, 2006, insulation foam, buckets, light, lenses; both at Smack Mellon.



and Catholic kitsch. Meanwhile Yuskavage acknowledges her debt to artists like de Chirico and Caravaggio, who also found themselves vulnerable to charges of impurity and inauthenticity.

This double show, her first New York solo in three years, presented full-scale paintings, small studies and a set of beautifully crafted drawings that provide variations on a set of themes. The show reveals a change of subject—the wistful isolated waifs of old are now presented in company. Many of the works offer pairs of women who cling to each other in poses that are more protective than

woman bites down on a section of pomegranate, that ancient symbol of sexuality and fertility.

The paintings of pairs of women are oddly unsettling. *Painted Things* (2006) is particularly strange. Here a nubile young girl clasps a much larger and strangely doll-like nude woman at the edge of a precipice. The stormy sky behind them and the contrast between youth and deformity brings to mind the "Caprichos" of Goya. Other works on this theme have less contrast between the two figures, but there is often an ambiguity between caresses and gestures of control.

These images, with their garlands of flowers, pastel colors and winsome blonde protagonists, skirt dangerously close at times to the confections of Maxfield Parrish. They are held back from full-fledged sentimentality by their otherworldly luminescence. Yuskavage is often paired with John Currin, but where Currin emphasizes the materiality of his images—the huge breasts in his early nude females are massive deformities, made more repellent by their solidity—in Yuskavage's paintings such endowments are permeated with light and are nearly transparent, giving them a peculiarly spiritual quality. This may be why her works are so difficult to place—they deal with the nude, that most carnal of images, but they subject it to an almost religious transfiguration.

—Eleanor Heartney

## Jim Richard at Oliver Kamm/5BE

For years, New Orleans painter Jim Richard has articulated an acidic social commentary through unpeopled interiors of the showy sort featured in domicile magazines. Many of his paintings employ an icy, synthetic palette to depict settings over-decorated with contrasting examples of historical and recent art. "These are the places," one critic wrote, "where art goes to die."

In an impressive recent show, Richard expanded his range to include abstract works as well as his collages, which he has not previously shown. These works are rough studies for his canvases, and here he exhibited both mediums together for the first time. While there were no one-to-one pairings, the collages informed the mostly larger paintings, suggesting sources for their uneasy juxtapositions; moreover, these artifacts of Richard's process ably stand on their own.

In the entryway, *Around the Bend* (2006) set the tone for the disjunctions that characterized a number of the works. In this small gouache on paper, a schematic mountain landscape in purple and gray is dominated by the illusionistic depiction of a framed abstract painting that incongruously floats in the foreground at monumental scale and, strangely, is turned at an oblique angle to the picture plane.

Four midsize oil-on-linen paintings (all 2006) continued the tacky-interiors motif. They're dominated by space-flattening