

# NEW YORK, of course



Ralph Herrmanns

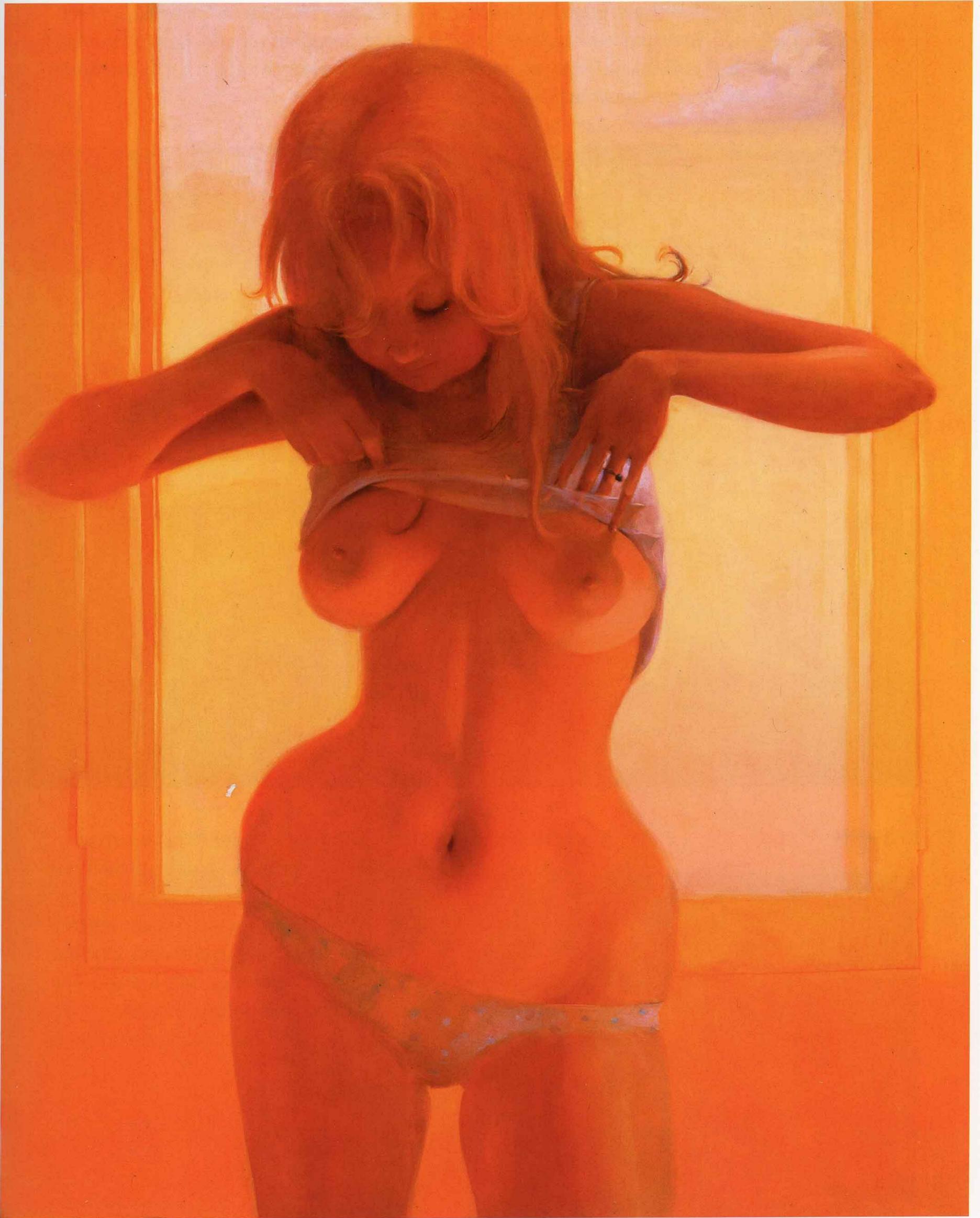
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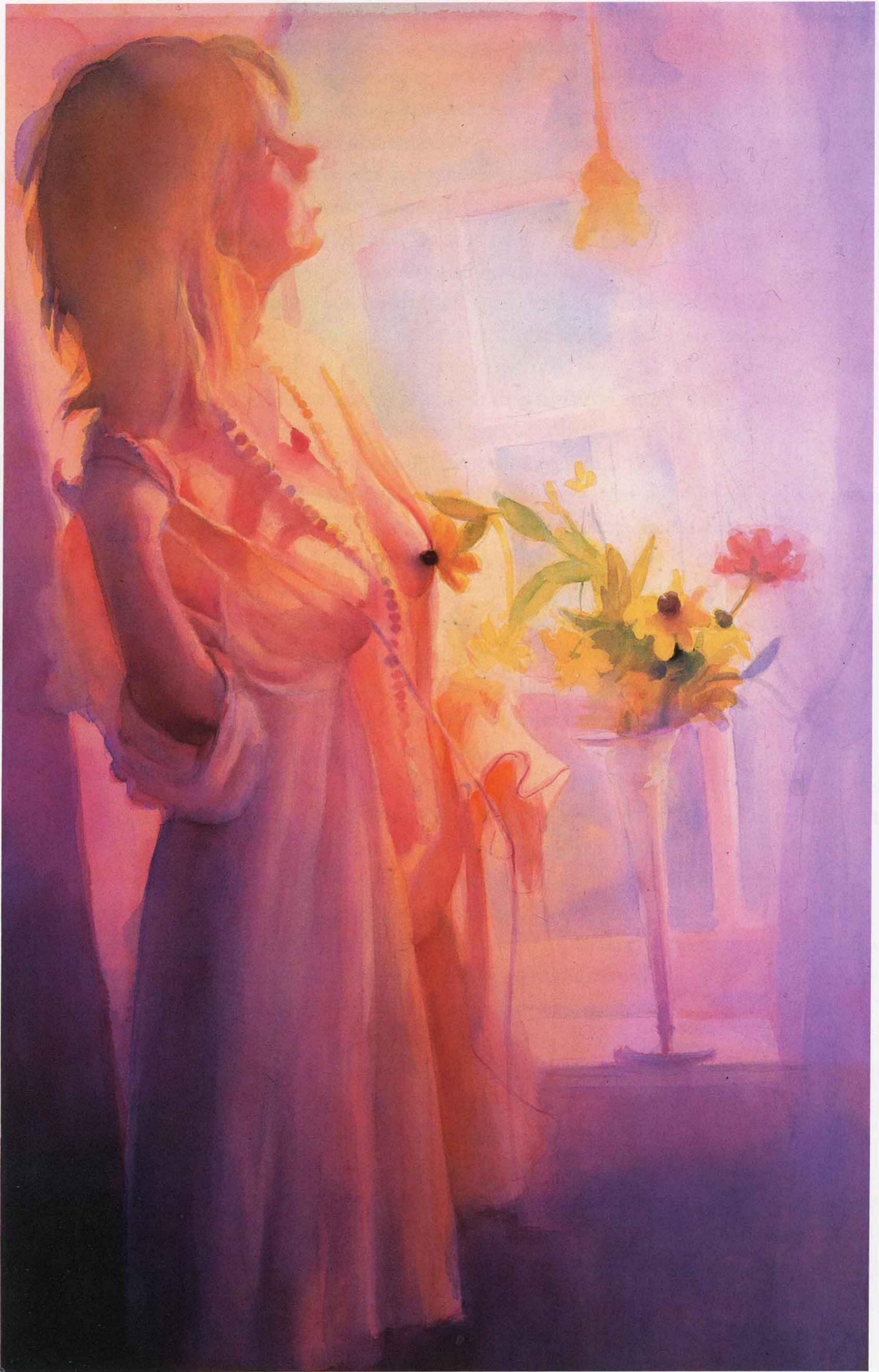
Page 5: Frank Stella's hands.

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**Lisa Yuskavage**  
*Day*, 1999-2000  
oil on linen 77x62 in  
Courtesy David Zwirner, New York



**Lisa Yuskavage**  
*KK Thinking*, 2001  
watercolour on paper 58x35,5 in  
Courtesy David Zwirner, New York.

Am I Provocative?

**Lisa Yuskavage**

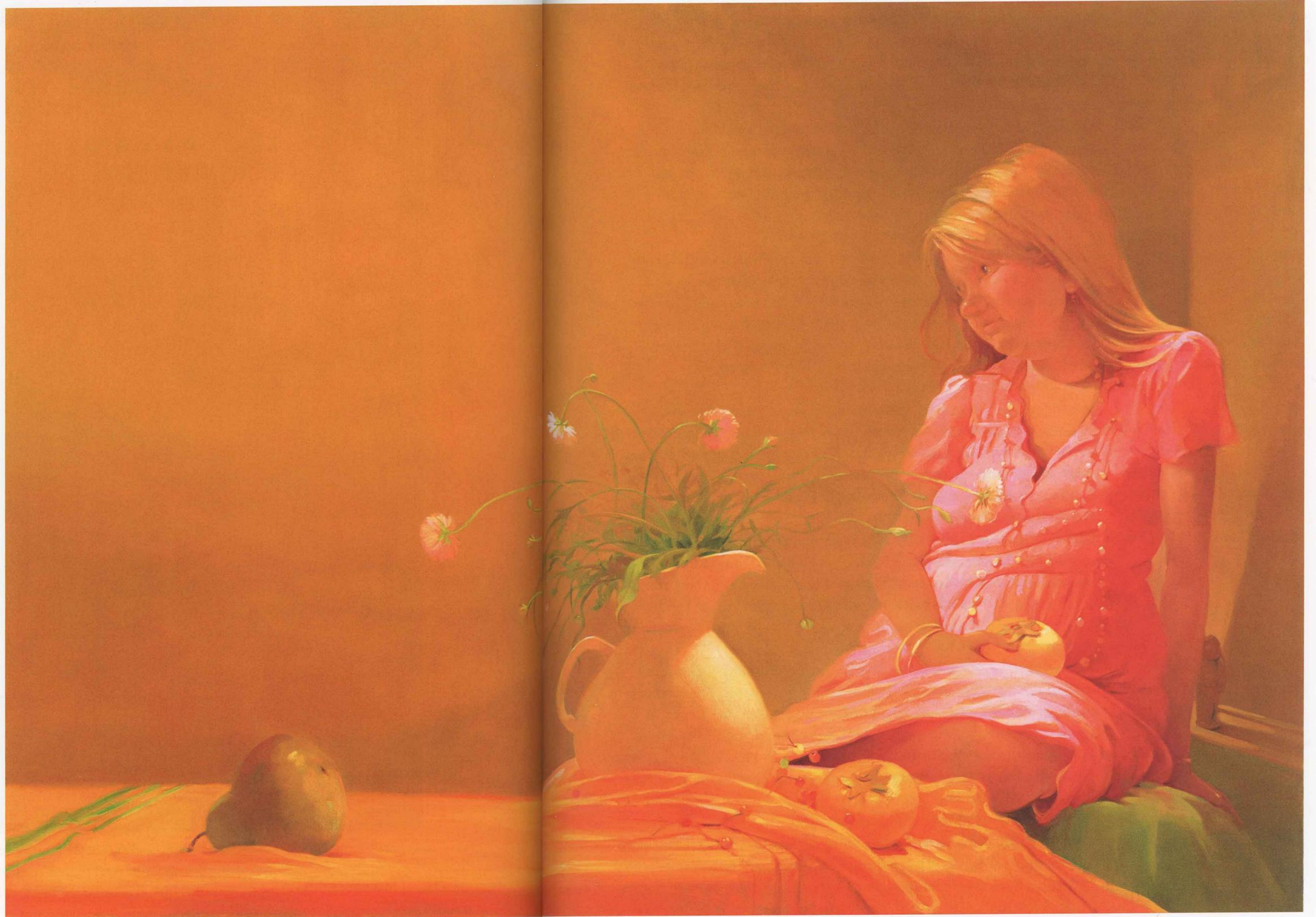
born in Philadelphia 1962

Am I provocative? Generally provocative? Yes! I mean that as a person I am provocative, I have a history of being provocative, but not necessarily sexually provocative. There are many ways to be provocative, you provoke a response, yes. I am someone who enjoys provoking responses, and I think in a way my work channels that talent.

Some women like my paintings. Some women don't like them. Some men like them, some men don't like them. Gay men like them, gay men don't like them. Some lesbians like them, some lesbians don't like them. It really is not a categorical thing. Men are not necessarily looking for always the same thing in art. Some people find art rather useless, my project for sure.

I am very open to what feelings they evoke, sometimes sadness, sometimes humour, sometimes a sensual thing, a combination of things that are contradictory at the same time. I think that people are quite layered and complex. I hope to allow for that in my paintings, I think people are contradictory and I like that. I like to allow for that.

So on one hand, maybe, you might find yourself enjoying the picture as a humorous thing, and suddenly you see something very sad. There is something sad about it. And then it continues to evolve, my paintings evolve to me as I learn about myself. Or as I get distance. I see different things in my paintings as I go along.



**Lisa Yuskavage**  
*Persimmons*, 2006  
oil on linen 48x72 in  
Courtesy David Zwirner, New York.

I am a pretty intuitive artist and not a... a... Often people have been sure that my work was backed up by some sort of manifesto of feminism. In the past that was what people often would say to me... Oh... they would be surprised that my work was not manifesto, or kind of theoretical driven.

I follow very old-fashioned examples of art, I want to make a picture that is really interesting visually. Saying that a landscape is just pretty, I think there are great landscapes that are not just pretty. By someone like Constable, Turner, there are quite profound paintings, and they comment on humanity.

I would like to believe that anything is possible in my work. Like the struggle with one's inner world as well as the outer world. Complexities really are interesting ideas to me. But, you know, I present them quite bluntly on one level, these complexities are presented quite strongly and directly.

I have been working for twenty years or something like that, and I continue to work with the figure of female protagonist...that has remained... I mean there have been paintings of men, there has been paintings of still life and there has been other paintings. But the sort of strongest impulse for me to work from, to work with this female protagonist as the centre of what I am doing. Because I just find it incredibly engaging.

When I was very young, 19 years old, I was very compelled to go and live in Rome. Not all Americans are compelled to go to Europe, but I was very strongly following an instinct to do it. And that instinct drove me to an awareness of what European art really is. Because seeing it in Europe, not in a picture gallery on Madison Avenue or Park Avenue or whatever, I really got an idea of it.

In the Vatican the Raphael frescoes! How much they are so much a part of Raphael, the character himself, the human being. You could imagine what he looked like, you could feel him. I visited his grave, there are so many graves, de Chirico's grave, I visited Raphael's grave in the Pantheon... I want to be buried there. Next to him.

I stayed in Rome for six months, studied, and then later I visited again. This had a very great impact on what I believe great art is. The kind of painting that was going on when I was a young person in America was for me shallow or hollow compared to what I wanted my art to be like. I did not think of myself as a narrative painter. And I had no grounds as an nineteen year old to be so presumptuous to say that I want something more. Like I did.

I did not want to make art about art which is what abstract expressionism had become by the 80's. The painting in America had really lost its way. In London there were some very interesting things going on with Lucian Freud, Leon Kossoff and Frank Auerbach. But I was very puzzled why

American art seemed like, when it was figurative, say Tom Wesselmann or people like that, it seemed they were always still commenting on modernism.

And it seemed there was a taboo against Europe, all Europe entering art. It was such a taboo, and I realized that that was what I wanted. To find a way to bring something of that density of these pictures that I had seen, which were religious pictures. It was Christ going around doing this and doing that, I called them *Jesus And His Friends*. They were about humanity, these pictures, and they were also incredible paintings in terms of how... how the paintings tell the story.

These painters, like they would paint the same subject over and over again, they did not have to choose their subjects. The subjects were chosen for them. So truly, painting was something they could focus on, developing painting. Whereas in America realist painters were driven into the basement because they were ashamed of being a realist. It is considered very backwards.

So then I went to art-school and decided that I would simply accept that I was a really... I accepted that I would be a happy... happy is not the right word... that I would be an artist that was doing what I wanted to do, even if it was considered unimportant by other people.

I moved to New York from Yale, and I started to look at 80's art. And I began to realize that there was this kind of spirit in this work that I liked, that I thought was really interesting. I liked how Mike Kelly's work seemed to include a sense of class, a kind of working class aesthetics. And Jeff Koons' polychrome sculptures seemed in some way to be so perverse. And I thought If only all this could be figurative painting. So I began to understand what my project really was.

The perversity and the provocation initially in my work was the perversity of being a realist painter.

I don't know what it is like to be those girls in my paintings, I don't have a 22 inch waist. But I know other things about that. I know what it is to be in a relationship with a person like that. It is like a spectacle, you know. Those particular women I had in my show at the Whitney Biennial in 2000, they were like spectacles.

Sometimes when I look back on the work I have been doing, and I see what is going on in American culture in terms of just people being obsessed with what they look like, and altering what they look like, I was probably in some ways innocently picking up on that. I don't start out saying I am going to make a commentary about American culture.

That is not the way I go about this.

I go about it, and I just make my work.

## Master of Fine Prints

**Bill Goldston**

born 1943

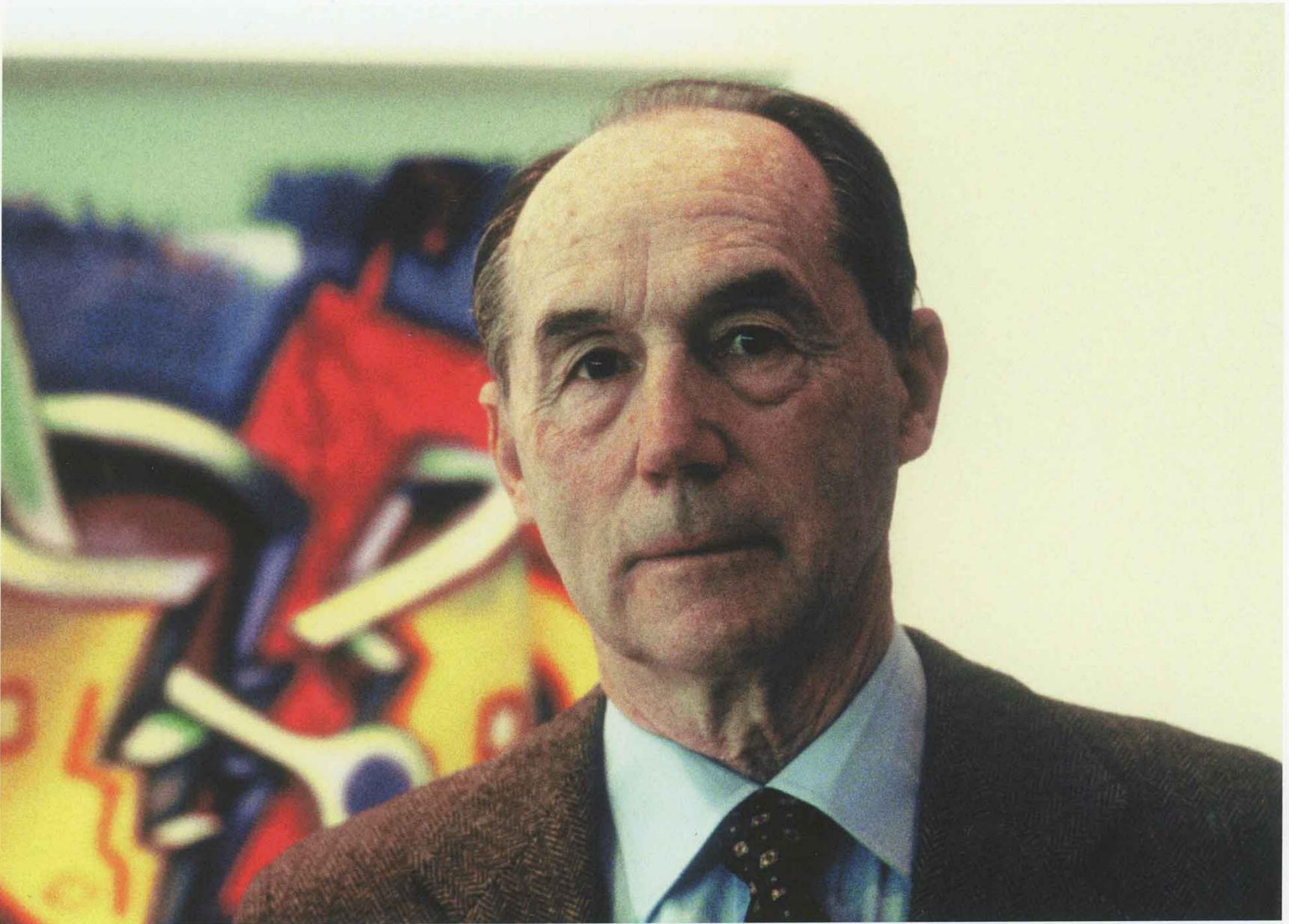
\* March 8, 2007

It is certainly an interesting time right now to look at. Here in the MOMA and today\* I have been through two or three exhibitions. I know it is not a good statement to make about it, but the most interesting thing I saw was Picasso's *Woman Combing Her Hair*.

I looked at it with an artist studying it also. He is a contemporary artist, very interested in how the Picasso painting works in relationship to his own. Because the painting is a figure on the ground we asked: Was Picasso just cleaning his brushes and started the painting as a result of this? Or was it really a concentrated effort?

We did not resolve that question, and the discussion can go on for a long time. In that artist's studio is a canvas stretched. I was in his studio three weeks ago. Colour has been primed on the surface of that painting. The artist is still trying to grapple with the issue of how to apply paint to the surface of the canvas so that a new way to reveal the image will come from that work.

Being a publisher/printer I have an understanding of the process of printmaking. When I see an artist thinking about this problem it makes me wonder how we can utilize this. My studio ULAE, Universal Limited Art Editions, is focusing on these kind of problems. We are not trying to focus on issues that deal primarily technically with the challenges of the technique, but we are focused on how to capture that energy and bring it from one point to another point.



We are publishers first, printers second. So an invitation to make a print has to come from me, the publisher, to the artist.

How do you work with an artist, and consequently, how do you choose an artist? There are right now many movements all around. Nobody I know is able to say: This is art, and this is not art. Any broad explanation I can apply to what is and what is not art goes – Art is what is made by people who call themselves artists.

If a person has the courage to call himself an artist, then I have to believe that what he does is art.

Publishing and printing, both of them parallel, are collaborating processes. Unlike a drawing or a painting, in the studio when an artist works directly with his medium printmaking requires the use of people. Another physical being, another presence around.

So working is really crucial. How do you figure it out physically to work with somebody? How do you feel in the presence of that person, can you actually be in that space with him? And psychologically, how do you get into the thought in which everybody is on the same line. Moving as fast forward as you can, so that they can see the progress of the project?

You have to be able to understand how the two or three or four or five can make something happen that is going to be greater than what the artist can do by himself.

In the period of Johns, Rauschenberg, Rosenquist, Dine and Motherwell, in the early 60's, there was this newness to the idea of publishing lithographs. An uniqueness in America that nobody had seen before. It was brought forward by this Russian Jewish immigrant Tatyana Grosman who knew nothing technical about printmaking. She had the artist come to work, and she hired the printer to come and print. This newness was really the thing people gravitated to, were interested in this cottage industry some place\*. Fifty years later you can not use that definition any longer because it is no longer unique.

\* West Islip on Long Island

I have worked with this for thirty-eight years, and recently I have struggled with the idea how to approach new young artists. It is a generational thing going on here? I am almost 64 years old, and for me to be excited about the work of a 25, 26 or 32 years old, how am I going to be able to communicate? How can my staff communicate with that person?

How can we embrace somebody, bring him in into our studio and actually do something with him he has a need to do?

Now twenty-five years since 1982 when I took over the studio, I am rethinking. How am I going to start for the first time what I think is a really fresh idea with what I am doing in terms of the way I like people? The way that I work with people?

Lisa Yuskavage is one of the new generation of artists I work with. Her energy, her thinking, lends itself in some ways to the same feelings that



Lisa Yuskavage

you could say Jasper Johns did in 1960. Because there was a good need for him to take a crayon and draw targets on a stone. As Lisa can take a pencil and do a drawing of a female figure on a stone. Again the medium of the stone comes together with a very interesting kind of energy. Because of the technical information available to the printer, the difference in the technique, and the difference in the way we are able to manage it now is Jasper Johns, who was struggling to draw the target on the stone and get it printed on a piece of paper.

Can we print it on a piece of paper without destroying it?

This was a thick issue back in the 60's. Jasper had lost several drawings. He did the figures two or three times, every time the stone was black solid, the image disappeared from the stone.

Lisa Yuskavage has not to deal with that. She comes to the studio, she draws on the stone. And what are we doing? We pull a proof on a piece of Mylar, clear plastic. We still have the original stone sitting over here on the stone-press. Then we scan the mylar into the computer, and we capture the digital image of it. We can now lay that piece of film on a lithographic plate, and we can burn the image onto the plate. We print it on a piece of paper on a handset offset-press. A whole other world!

Lisa loves drawing on the stone. There is something about drawing on a rock from the earth's surface. There is an emotional issue between you and the rock that when you touch it, it is like an electrical thing that happens between you and the drawing tool.

Part of the story is about the kind of artist you are working with, the kind of artist I am looking for to-day. I am looking for artists that have a frame of mind or a thought process that permits exploration. A kind of ability to jump over areas and arrive at a total unknown.

Of all the artists I know only Kiki Smith was born in a family in which the father, Tony, was an artist. Given that she already comes at whatever she does from a different place than everyone else does, Kiki can not help herself but make art. No matter what she does, it has some molecule of philosophy that is about making art. She is an artist in every cell in her body, and that is not true for everybody who today puts themselves in a category called an artist.

In twenty years the ones that have been successful today may not exist for various reasons. We do not know what that will mean. You look at an *artist* like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg and James Rosenquist and Frank Stella, and you see the history of forty or fifty years. You know without a doubt when you say artist they are an example of what you would think as an artist.

Kiki Smith comes from a very similar point of view in that her whole life was started out with art. When she is awake there is that crazy thing going