

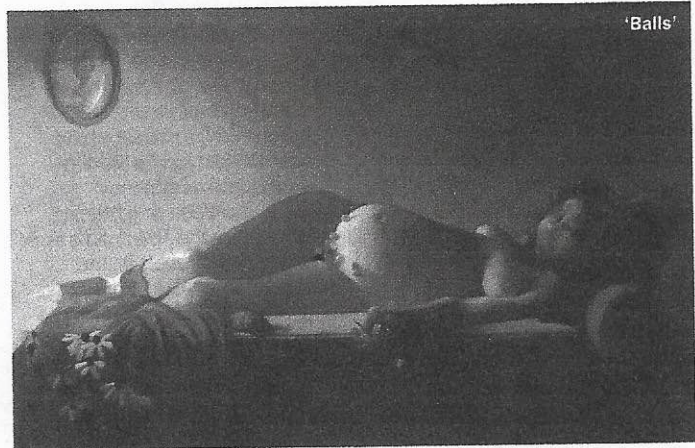
Lisa Yuskavage Greengrassi South

Lisa Yuskavage's paintings of huge-breasted women with swollen bellies and languorous pouts are often likened to those by fellow American John Currin. Both artists appear to sail pretty close to the wind but, in times of correctness, Currin's romantically-tinted, yet savage heterosexuality is profoundly confusing whereas Yuskavage's gender simplifies matters somewhat. These might be porny takes on classical subject matter but a woman painting distortions of her own sex is a perfectly justifiable practice that straightforwardly delineates aspects of gender politics.

The burden of codification swept deftly aside, we can get on with appreciat-

ing Yuskavage's consummate technique and often devastating use of colour. Her well-worked surfaces combine fine mimetic rendering with the eddying light of Turner – to quixotic effect. Yuskavage rotates imagery and themes. A woman lying on her back, naked but for high heels, is the subject of a small, delicate watercolour and a large, vivid, golden canvas. Flowers and tresses, teapots and lavish drapes recur throughout. Romance oozes, yet every so often we are jolted by a too-bulbous nose, a hard, black currant for an eye or a leg that seems to have got lost behind the other. Subject matter undoubtedly reigns, but these sick, obscure aberrations remind us that huge tits and arses have become utterly normalised as caricatures of sex.

Sally O'Reilly



'Balls'