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delia brown

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New York

Delia Brown continues her ongoing investigations of dissolute vacuity among young, seemingly aimless fashionistas with *Pastorale*, a music video she produced and directed that documents her latest glamorous, fabricated party. This time, instead of producing watercolor paintings in the style of fashion shoots based on photos from her staged events, the artist lets the video tell the tale. Using hired actors, Brown sets the scene in an upscale country lodge nestled in an arcadian wood, its pseudo-rustic elegance as much an artifice as the party itself. Emulating "reality TV," the camera pans participants who pretend not to notice while they subtly preen. A haunting soundtrack plays by Goapele, a singer/songwriter, who herself drifts through the chimerical party as if it were her own music video. The viewer is invited to attend, but only as a voyeur. The exclusion is critical, tantalizing, and ultimately alienating. Despite the initial alluring fabulousness of it all, the video unfolds as a scathing social satire, a ripping send up of fashion's hollow mythologies of the good life. Further exploring the dichotomy between superficiality and

| **Delia Brown** *Between Hameau and Walden #5*, 2002, oil on canvas, 83.8 x 152.4 cm.

substance are a series of paintings entitled "Between Hameau and Walden": imaginary landscapes in luscious emeralds, fuschias, violets, and strident yellows that veer from impressionistic representation to near abstraction. Although sweetly beguiling on the surface they are, like the scenes in the video, contemporary morality tales. Unlike the video's exposure of nihilism that offers no solutions, Brown here tempers her cautionary didactics with philosophical alternatives for spiritual renewal. Works such as #3 exemplify this; its leafy grotto leads the viewer into quiet interior spaces, as a boat's prow drifts out of the picture. These works seem to literally reference Henry David Thoreau's search for "self reliance" and independence from the established culture via contemplation of Walden Pond. The perils of triviality are explored in the cinematically lit, cartoony #4, which obliquely references Marie Antoinette's *Le Hameau de la Reine*, the extravagant gardens at Versailles where the doomed Queen acted out the fantasies of peasant life for which she eventually lost her head.

Joyce Korotkin

