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GOTHAM ART & THEATER

by Elisabeth Kley



Delia Brown, *A Mother's Joy*, 2008



Delia Brown, *Mother's Bathroom*, 2008

Delia Brown, a figurative painter from Los Angeles, is exhibiting a series of paintings of mothers and female children in a show titled *Precious* at D'Amelio Terras. Brown's previous paintings of vapid young people enjoying a clichéd celebrity life are sometimes mistakenly considered autobiographical, but the work is really grounded in social satire and a sense of loss. This time the twist is that none of the women portrayed (including the artist herself) are really mothers, or even related to the children they are with.

Painted with loose tiny brushstrokes, these very small pictures (the largest is 14 x 18 in.) are reminiscent of works by American impressionists Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt. Women and children interact inside bourgeois interiors filled with modern and faux antique accoutrements, including stuffed animals, brand name foods, small candelabras with shades, and canopied beds. In *Homework* (2008) a woman strokes one little girl's hair while holding another toddler on her knee. The figures are almost overwhelmed by the wallpaper of tangled green and turquoise vegetation behind them.

Other paintings of pre-teen nymphets suggest works by François Boucher and Jean-Honore Fragonard. The subject of *Portrait of an Idling Young Girl* (2008) sprawls in a chair looking bored as her dog looks on alertly from the couch. A tray of jars of green peas adds a contrasting touch to the golden light suffusing the room. This strangely oppressive, almost claustrophobic scene of privileged wealth conveys a sense of emptiness amid overwhelming clutter.