

# frieze

May 23, 2008

*By Morgan Falconer*

## **Delia Brown**

D'AMELIO TERRAS, NEW YORK, USA

Delia Brown's new pictures hold out a dim hope for New York's patron class, that they may finally get the flattery they crave whilst also patronising the new art. Perhaps Brown doesn't take commissions, but they would surely come flowing in if she did: her very candied new figurative paintings depict her female friends, often with children, in a series of invented situations that have them living the dream lives of the urban American rich.

Motherhood, money and sex appeal are the prizes that these fictional women cherish above all: the woman reclining on a bed with her toddler in *A Mother's Joy* (all works 2008) is revelling in her triumph in see-through lingerie; the slick matriarch in *Winter Portrait* holds her cherubs amidst spacious, old world interiors. All have won life's lottery, and they intend to ensure that their children do so too: in *The Recital*, the glamorous mother observes her darling playing a tiny grand piano with all the stately grace of a concert pianist; in *Mother's Bathroom* a couple of teenage girls practise applying lipstick in an interior that could almost be the backdrop for a Rococo love scene. Brown knows the language of style these women speak, the blend of formality and informality, and she knows the painterly language they want themselves portrayed in as well – the flushes of peach, the mildly expressive brushwork.

Brown's new work reminds one of Jeff Koons' occasional satires on the baubles of the rich. Her parodies are not quite so successful, though, since they could probably pass unnoticed alongside the work of those artists who really do service the vulgar end of the market. One also misses the fascinating clashes of genre and gender that have lit up Brown's pictures in the past: these scenes are essentially modernized, 'feminized' genre scenes, and they don't give off the sparks of some of Brown's Hopperesque scenes of women alone in the city. But her new work continues to mount a strong argument for the critical potential of figurative painting, and Brown continues to look like a girl's best bet to take on John Currin on his own turf and kick him in the balls. It's just a matter of time, and aim.

Morgan Falconer