



*Bedroom*  
2001  
Acrylic on board  
21.9 x 28.6 cm

## Delia Brown

**Place of residence** Los Angeles  
**Representation** D'Amelio Terras, New York  
**Courtesy** Delia Brown; D'Amelio Terras

### Recent exhibitions

**Solo** Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles (2001) > *What, Are You Jealous?*, D'Amelio Terras, New York (2000) > William Turner Gallery, Venice, CA, USA (1997) > **Group** *Spiritual America*, Audiello Fine Arts, New York (2001) > Echo Park Projects, Los Angeles (2000) > *Library*, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles (2000) > *Summer Group Show*, D'Amelio Terras, New York (2000) > *Sentimental Education*, Deitch Projects, New York (2000) > *New School*, Works on Paper Gallery, Los Angeles (1999) > *Spaced Out: Southern California Vernacular*, Herbert Marcuse Visual Arts Gallery, UCSD, San Diego (1999)

"These two paintings derived from a project that I did for the *New York Times Magazine*, which was a sort of subversive fashion shoot. The idea was to make an artwork out of the gallery context that was accessible to a wide audience without making anyone feel like they were looking at 'art'. It was an

attempt to turn paintings from rarefied objects into something more populist. Yet these paintings, which were not illustrated as part of the original project, will ultimately return to the gallery and reaffirm their status as unique cultural objects. In the gallery they can invoke references to the history of painting. Some of these references are: the small casual studies for larger paintings made by masters of the academy; images of the bourgeois class in leisure moments, like the work of Rococo painter Pietro Longhi as well as the Impressionists Cassatt, Morisot and Degas; and bacchanal paintings, a subject which dates all the way back to the Renaissance.

"But because of their contemporary (and trendy) trappings, such as cellphones, junk food, and designer sunglasses, they prioritise the current moment over the universal. And they continually refer back to fashion photography and the look and imagined lifestyle of hip hop and rock stars. In referencing those products of culture and commerce I feel that I am talking about desire. The myth of painting is that it transcends the banality of this moment, that it brings us closer to a spiritual truth, and that it is beyond materiality. While I wish it were true, I am saying it operates within a capitalist framework and it is part of the same language of signs that is motivated by our con-

stant feeling of lack. And it (painting) is a vehicle to talk about the things we know and want. Which is why I think my painting style is so unmannered. Because I feel as soon as you start developing an individual mannerism and become recognisable for it, then the whole discussion of your work becomes about manner and technique, i.e. its signature, and then the content of the work gets subordinated. So that if I end up doing a project here and there that isn't painting per se (such as a performance I did in grad school when I turned my studio into a 'salon' and gave makeovers to 20 people) it will not be treated with the kind of suspicion we treat secondary practices with. In that sense I suppose I would rather have my practice be seen as a conceptual practice before a painting practice. Which is not to say I don't feel strongly about issues of craft in painting. I do want to make beautiful pictures. I struggle a lot with craft, and am always trying to learn new techniques and ways to use materials. The mediums I use the most are watercolour and oils. I always work from a photograph, which I take myself, or if I am in the picture I hire a photographer to take it. Staging the photos generally entails borrowing a location (such as a house with a pool), although once I built my own location from scratch, renting prop furniture and installing carpet and

wallpaper. I use friends and acquaintances to populate the scenes, and I use a lot of props (such as drinks, cigarettes, music, clothing, jewellery, magazines, and books). Although I often put myself in my work, it is not necessarily important that the viewer can identify me. I put myself in there because part of the point of me making the picture is my desire to inhabit a particular social space. Painting provides a means for 'passing'. It's masquerade. And it's display too, in the sense that I can have power in the painting.

"Some artists I admire are: Madonna and Cindy Sherman for their ability to use their selves as shifting signifiers; Jeff Koons for making pretty art provocative; Mary Kelly for making work that is both theoretical and personally meaningful and experiential, and for being a challenging teacher; photorealist Audrey Flack's juicy still lifes; Gregory Crewdson, whose beautiful photos made me see the necessity of extravagant pre-production; Fragonard, Sargent, Helmut Newton, Ellen von Unwerth and Mario Testino for making foxy pictures of the privileged life that made me want to make and be in those pictures." Delia Brown



*High Tea*  
2001  
Acrylic on board  
23.8 x 36.8 cm