

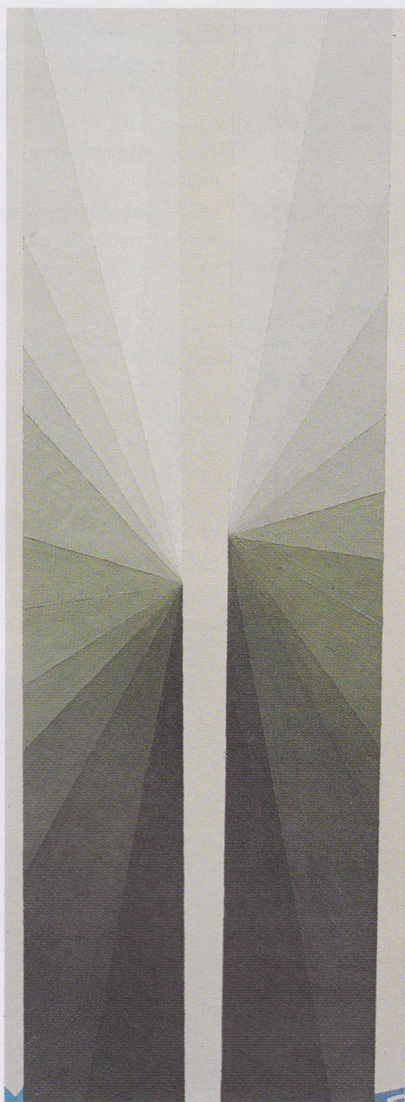


## Delia Brown

Delia Brown is a Los Angeles-based artist who shows regularly at D'Amelio Terras, New York, and Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles.

**1 WEST COAST DIVAS** Goapele, the Oakland-based soulstress of earthy and otherworldly beauty, inspired and starred in my recent video *Pastorale*. Her debut album, *Even Closer* (Skyblaze Recordings, 2002), is a hot seller in the Bay Area, and if there's any fairness in the world, she'll soon reach a much wider audience. The rapper Mystic also hails from Oakland. *Cuts for Luck and Scars for Freedom*—packed with smooth tracks and sharp lyrics—came out in 2001 on Goodvibe Recordings, but the fools at commercial radio slept on it. Mystic's labelmates in Los Angeles, Medusa & Feline Science, took the *LA Weekly* Hip-hop Artist of the Year Award in 2001 and 2002, but for some reason they, too, still haven't broken through the underground. Medusa rips the mike live. With a butch girl DJ, two big sexy backup singers, and great live instrumentation, they are off the hook—a female Funkadelic.

**2 AGAPE INTERNATIONAL SPIRITUAL CENTER** Reverend Michael Beckwith, founder of this transdenominational “church” in Culver City, is on par with Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. in my book. His sermons on the “love-intelligence that governs the universe” are delivered to the most diverse group I've ever seen gathered in one place, which in itself is pretty inspiring. Music director Rickie Byars writes original spirituals and conducts a first-rate choir. (Am I proselytizing?) Not for the resignedly cynical, nor those who can't stomach small doses of New Age-ness.



**3 THE ECKHART SOCIETY** Meister Eckhart, the fourteenth-century Dominican mystic, was accused of heresy and written out of ordained Catholic history. He preached on the spiritual principles of creativity (foreshadowing the Theosophists) and proposed a cosmology that placed God within human reach (plebeian = divine manifestation = not good for kings). The Eckhart Society, founded in 1987, publishes an annual journal and holds conferences dedicated to contemporary Eckhart scholarship. A new member myself, I'm always happy to discover that we don't have to raid Eastern philosophies to find the good stuff.

**4 MARK GROTJAHN** Though little excursions into conceptual territories have always been part of Grotjahn's practice, I (mis)understood his work to be of the highest order of modernism: a strictly formal investigation. His recent paintings disarmed me of my prejudice. Sober and patiently built-up rays of paint fan outward in a tonal spectrum, the oil thick and viscous right up to the edges—with one exception: Grotjahn left nearly phosphorescent underpainting exposed at the canvases' bottom corners, where his monogram glows in the negative space. More than a signature, the letters intrude on the composition, becoming perhaps its most important element—a self-conscious disclosure of authorial ego. This jolt came as a gift, allowing me to transcend my distrust of the “pure” painter and indulge with him in enjoying the wonderful physicality of paint.

**5 EMINEM'S LYRICS** Funny how things work sometimes. You could hear Eminem's first album booming from the trunks of black hip-hop fans' cars all over LA; it was the white contingent that needed some prodding and proof. Maybe they were scared to embrace a white rapper after Vanilla Ice bombed and House of Pain fell off. After Nas, I think Eminem is the most talented MC of the moment. Watch the final battle scene in *8 Mile* if you don't believe me.

**6 GOING WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE** The sudden, tragic death of Senator Paul Wellstone leaves us with the memory of a politician with *corazón* and *cajones*. What can be gained from our loss? His valiant example of standing for what is right regardless of personal or political cost.

**7 RUBIES, EMERALDS, AMETHYSTS** Anything, just boycott the bling. To anyone planning on popping the question to that special someone: Think twice before you make the trip to Tiffany. After 9/11 it became all the more evident there's something seriously wrong in the diamond industry. According to a report in the Amnesty International journal *Now*, Al Qaeda made millions buying untraceable diamonds from Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front. (RUF rebels have been terrorizing the region's population for a decade, mauling and murdering thousands of civilians to keep control of the diamond mines.) The United States Senate has yet to vote on the Clean Diamond Act, which is designed to make all diamonds identifiable by source. Until they do, if she really loves you, maybe she'll say yes to a lesser stone.

**8 N\*E\*R\*D, IN SEARCH OF . . .** (Virgin Records, 2002) The Neptunes, producers of such party classics as Ol' Dirty Bastard's “Got Your Money” and Nelly's “Hot in Herre,” always make their clients sound “Grindin’,” right? Well, their side project, hip-hop-rock-funk fusion band N\*E\*R\*D (“No One Ever Really Dies”), is what I listen to when I need a pick-me-up in the studio or the car. Their ill sense of humor peaks in “Brain.” A sample: “Girl unlatch your bra, but first unlatch your jaw.” (Believe it or not, the song's about loving a chick for her complicated mind and getting turned on just by listening to her talk.)

**9 12 VIEWS OF MANET'S BAR** (Princeton University Press, 1996) Down this case of essays on *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère* and you'll have absorbed a dozen ideological approaches at work in current art-history academia. Before the binge begins, be sure to have T.J. Clark's exhaustive socioeconomic analysis of the continually confounding picture as an aperitif.

**10 RED HOT + RIOT** (MCA Records, 2002) The latest installment in a compilation series created to raise money for AIDS awareness and relief programs, this album is dedicated to the late chief rocker Fela Kuti and features remakes and Fela-inspired original songs by everyone from his offspring to Talib Kweli, Money Mark, Macy Gray, and Meshell Ndegeocello. Love the syncopated, dubwise remix of Sade's “By Your Side.” □