



Print Article

**Delia Brown**

Having Arrived at C's Summer Home, F Gets Acquainted with Her New Room
2007-2011
Angles Gallery, Los Angeles

**Delia Brown**

At Another of C's Cocktail parties, F Catches the Eye of An Attractive Man...Paul
2011
Angles Gallery, Los Angeles

**Delia Brown**

F's Paranoia Leads to Mischievous

Delia Brown DELIA BROWN GETS SERIOUS, SORT OF

by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

The Los Angeles artist **Delia Brown**'s compelling new cycle of narrative paintings, titled "Felicity and Caprice," conflates the allegorical manner of **Jean Honore Fragonard** with the saucy storytelling of Jacqueline Susann. Actually, the tale told by Brown's series of some two dozen 8 x 12 in. oil-on-board works is derived from Claude Chabrol's 1968 film *Les Biches*, whose title is typically translated as *The Does* but might be more freely rendered as *The Bad Girls*.

Chabrol's story of an experienced patroness taking advantage of an innocent artist -- at least, until the tables are turned -- could easily seem threadbare material, but Brown reweaves the tapestry in a controlled conveyance of clues and dense layers of reference to film, fiction and art history. Her enterprise benefits, too, by virtue of her seductive painting. The pictures themselves lure viewers into sumptuous scenes of lust and betrayal. As in Brown's previous work, the drama takes place in the art world, in this case, the monied realm of the Upper East Side. (She thanks Celerie Kemble for the loan of her swanky apartment.)

The young artist in the story, named Why in the film, is called F in the titles of the paintings. She is first swept up in the glamour of C's lifestyle, and when threatened with the loss of her position, moves to exact her revenge, a triumph that can

Thoughts
2011
Angles Gallery, Los Angeles



Delia Brown
C Waxes Lyrical About Her Feelings for Paul
2011
Angles Gallery, Los Angeles



Delia Brown
Felicity, Victorious
2011
Angles Gallery, Los Angeles



Delia Brown
In There Like Swimwear
2008-2008
Martha Otero, Los Angeles

only lead to further tragedy but that will take place off screen, so to speak. As in literature, we are carried along by craft. This narrative cycle took five years to complete as Brown staged the scenes to be photographed and then painted them. Brown cast herself as the venal patroness, and so her identification is presumably not with the artist victim, Felicity, who was portrayed by actress Hollis Witherspoon. The object of their affections, Paul, was acted by the late book dealer John McWhinnie.

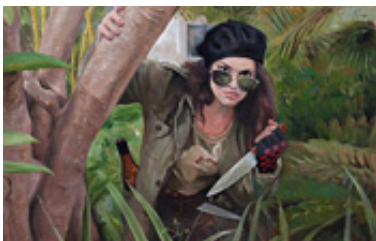
Brown's attention to detail makes each scene a pleasure. In the painting *Having Arrived at C's Summer Home, F Gets Acquainted with Her New Room* (2007-11), the young woman lies on a pink sofa next to a glass coffee table that contains a Yoshitomo Nara ashtray, an opened bottle of Diet Coke and a vase of flowers. Brown captures the reflection of light on all these accessories, the detail of some needlepoint pillows, and the lithe, light posture of the younger Felicity and the well-maintained beauty and tasteful jewelry of the older Caprice.

A Hamptons party -- staged in the real-world home of Liz Swig -- is a convincing gathering of familiar figures from a mobile and exclusive milieu. The question remains, however, whether the challenge for Fragonard is not also a problem for Brown. Guiltless pleasure played well until the arrival of the French Revolution. Can Brown depict a microcosm of power without falling prey to its charms? In the end she triumphs, as to be overtly critical would spoil the game. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, people who speak ill of society are those who can't get into it.

A second series of larger paintings by Brown, "Last Exit: Punta Junta," are concurrently on view at Martha Otero Gallery in cooperation with Country Club Projects. These follow along the lines of what she calls her "Guerrilla Lounging" series, whereby the artist manages to get herself and her friends invited to the vacation homes of the very rich. She portrays herself and two other trim, good-looking women, outfitted in stylish camo gear or bikinis, playing cards, lounging around pool, bedroom and beach, even acting out guerrilla tactics in the gardens.



Delia Brown
Card Game
 2012
 Martha Otero, Los Angeles



Delia Brown
Katya
 2012
 Martha Otero, Los Angeles



Delia Brown
*Les Demoiselles de Saint
 Barthelemy*
 2012
 Martha Otero, Los Angeles

The paintings achieve a small-scale subversion, giving a contemporary twist to the elemental antagonism between artist and patron. And they have art subtexts. The series includes a parody of *Les Demoiselles*, and the series titled "Last Exit" could refer to Thomas Lawson's 1981 *Artforum* article written in defense of painting. *The Arrival by Sea of Raina Bouvier 3000* (2009), which portrays a contemporary Medici princess in her bikini perched like a goddess on the prow of a boat motored up to the beach by a tanned, golden haired young man, is a latter-day *Birth of Venus*.

Narrative paintings are a hard sell in today's art world. In her ambitious paintings of big themes on a small scale, themes larger than the artist herself, Brown is dealing with the felicitous and capricious relationship between society and its artists.

Delia Brown, "Felicity & Caprice," Feb. 24-Apr. 7, 2012, at Angles Gallery, 2754 S. La Cienega Boulevard, Los Angeles, Ca. 90034.

Delia Brown, "Last Exit: Punta Junta," Mar. 3-Apr. 14, 2012, at Martha Otero, 820 North Fairfax, Los Angeles, Ca. 90046.

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Delia Brown

The Arrival By Sea of Raina

Bouvier 3000

2009

Martha Otero, Los Angeles