

PAINTING PEOPLE

Charlotte Mullins



Thames & Hudson

Glenn Brown

America, 2004 [below left]

The Riches of the Poor, 2003 [right]

Death Disco, 2004 [opposite]



Brown's paintings reproduce iconic works of art by Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Fragonard and others. In *The Riches of the Poor*, he continues his exploration of the work of Frank Auerbach, using Auerbach's *Head of J. T. M.*, 1973, as a template (see p. 149). But unlike the original, which is crusty with impasto, Brown's version has a glossy smooth surface, much like a photograph. All of Brown's paintings explore this transition – subtle or otherwise – between the authentic work or art and its reproduction. Paintings are photographed to allow their likenesses to be

disseminated, and it is this photographic reproduction of the original that Brown diligently works from, creating a copy of a copy. Increasingly, Brown is manipulating his subjects. *Death Disco*, based on Rembrandt's painting *Flora*, 1634, has stripped the woman of her contextual setting, elongated her and replaced tonal amber hues with lurid reds and blues. *Flora* now has bloodshot eyes; many of Brown's subjects have cataracts or eye problems, as if to say that when we look at reproductions of paintings we are not seeing the real thing, only a poor substitute.

