



ARTFORUM

jberezin | log out | ADVERTISE | BACK ISSUES | CONTACT US | SUBSCRIBE

search

ARTGUIDE | DIARY | PICKS | NEWS | IN PRINT | FILM | 500 WORDS | VIDEO | PREVIEWS | TALKBACK | A & E | BOOKFORUM | 中文版

All material in the Artforum Archive is protected by copyright. Permission to reprint any article from the Artforum archive must be obtained from [Artforum Magazine](#).

iona rozeal brown

07.17.07

AUTHOR: ANNIE BUCKLEY

06.30.07-08.11.07 *Sandroni.Rey*

Is it possible, given the historical objectification of women's bodies, to reclaim and recontextualize the female form? Or is this a conceptual dream that inevitably results in oxymoronic dead ends? Numerous recent exhibitions of feminist art have offered fresh consideration of these questions, and iona rozeal brown's newest body of work, "the epidemic of excess, the detriment of denial," takes this perspective as axiomatic. Brown's polymorphic fusion of cultures, histories, identities, and politics is couched neatly in the flat surfaces of her sumptuous paintings. The deep bronzes and shimmering browns of her female subjects' skin merge with the brilliant colors and rich patterns surrounding them. Like Martha Rosler, whose nudes sprawl playfully across the "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution" exhibition-catalogue cover, brown makes a case for exuberantly embracing seemingly objectifying ideals; unlike Rosler, brown approaches the subject of body and identity through adornment. Here, the polemical male or female gaze is supplanted by the more democratic glare of materialism and filtered through the multidimensional prism of race and culture. From wonderfully absurd hairstyles—including midnight-black tresses strewn with fist-size diamonds and intricately patterned blue-black dreadlocks—to elaborate surroundings, decoration thrillingly, if nightmarishly, engulfs the women in brown's paintings. But like the warriors and courtesans in the Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints that often serve as brown's inspiration, her subjects can also seem uncannily empowered by the excess that drowns them.