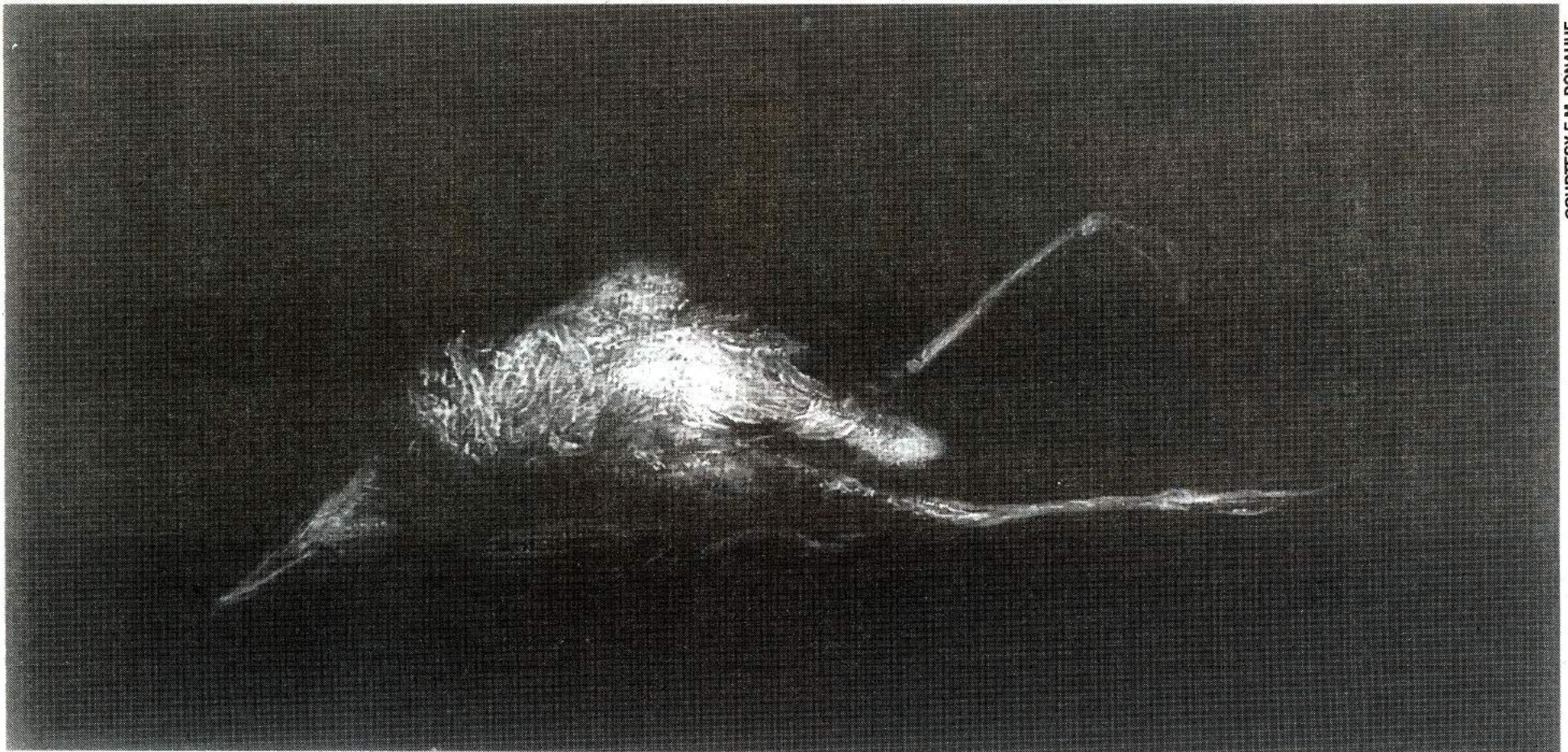


INDIVIDUAL ISSUES



COURTESY E.M. DONAHUE

Brenda Zlamany *Bird #1 1993 6x12" oil on panel*

Bald Guys, Dead Birds, and the Gaping Earth Figure Prominently in Shows Around Soho

Robert C. Morgan

Somehow when I saw Brenda Zlamany's show of the holy twelve artists and critics like Lucio Pozzi, Gary Stephan and Georg Dokoupil, coupled with dead finches and other varieties of small birds I realized that nature morte continues to live. It was a set-up, to be sure. More than a deconstruction, it was a provocation. These guys have to be artists! Or are they criminals? Could the book-seller on the street below tell the difference?

Zlamany has pulled it off, so to speak, like an "old master" — employing an au courant, post-poetical, trance-like style. The comparative association between the portrait and the bird is implicit. Why the bird? Baldness = hard, birdness = soft. Themes of sexuality and power run rampant throughout the lot. The reversals are intriguing. The male subject has been

ceremoniously objectified after all those centuries of lounging females mistresses. Zlamany offers us a convincing glimpse of male reality.

Sometimes funny, sometimes bizarre — these familiar, multi-culti faces look brawny and, in some cases, verging on psychopathy. Once again, the larger theme returns — the artist as criminal. But is this merely a gender issue? If so, it has little to do with Zlamany's ingenuity as a painter. Here is a very good show to begin the season, a bit of naturalism, perchance, inspired by that incessantly charming postmodern monk who maintains the premises.

Rococo Roue

Picasso's *Women* — a familiar subject by now, given the mediocre tabloid writing of that wife of a Texas billionaire. But the show at the Met is a must. The late twenties and thirties were a great period for this chieftain of *l'ecole de Paris*. Europe was on the verge of war, the hardship and privation, and the tension was pervasive. And amidst it all, Picasso worked from the inside out, examining love, filtering his experience through the mysteries of mental and physical eroticism. Marie-Therese and Dora. One gets the impression that they are very different from one another. The internal psychological drama of Picasso's own Oedipal drama lingers through both affairs; yet somehow he was capable of channeling his emotions into his 1937 masterpiece — a nearly rococo revivalism, a cubist feast — "Guernica."

Nancy Grossman's collages, inspired by volcanos seen in Hawaii, are masterpieces of collage and drawing. The lyrical control and intuitive gusto of these works is amazing. Grossman is, I dare say, an indelible artist, a major aesthetic presence who is capable of sustaining excellence. Her work explores the unknown territory, the dark side.

Lava Limn

Grossman's lava landscapes of the soul go deeply into our psychic responses to nature. They communicate a certainty within the flow, yet there is an embedded

know, even if only a few measures have been played.

Elga Wimmer has a show about "Couples" which sounds trite, but the proof is in the work itself — and there are five, maybe six, works in this show that stand out. Whether the quality of work is shared by each couple within the context of this show seems arbitrary, but in two cases it is synchronous. The collage-like sculpture by Alain Kirili is a late cubist joy, and the photo-collage by Ariane Lopez-Huici is brilliant and tactile and sensuous.

The Rona Pondick collage is better than many of the big works. The square lips and teeth, hidden behind paper, on a purposefully spatial field is magnificent. Her husband, Robert Feintuch, is probably an underrated artist — the cancelling out of old master paintings is very Lacanian, yet not in a purely theoretical sense. The painting by Louise Fishman — superb abstraction — is inscrutable. The colorful painting of faces being wiped away through the speed of the turn by David Humphrey — it held my interest; but the first five are worth the show.

The season looks good. There seems to be some serious energy and fewer gimmicks and less strategizing than in the previous four or five seasons since the market went cold. Now is the time to reconsider the pricing of art and to get the damn prices within an affordable range and forget the egotistical plundering that sent the market caving in from its own vanity.

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uneasiness. I know of few artists today who are able to communicate such rich and subtle emotions. Given her reputation as a sculptor, this exhibition should establish Grossman as a pictorial artist beyond reproach. It is like music that you