

Flash Art International

Vol. XXVIII n° 184 October 1995

BRENDA ZLAMANY

SABINE WACHTERS

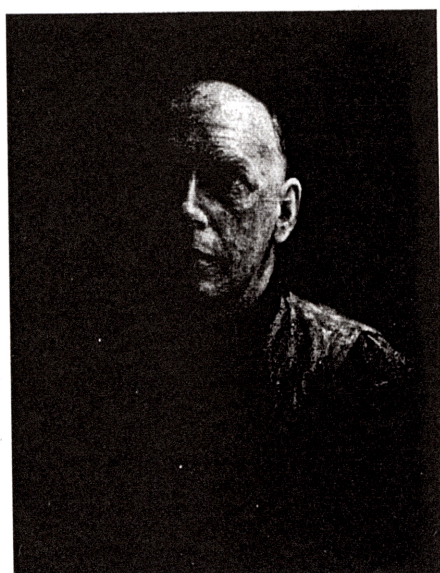
Brenda Zlamany's latest output, a series of painted portraits of bald men from the art world (artists, critics...) will provoke surprise, and make you shudder and recoil with a mixture of attraction and repulsion, fascination and aversion.

There is no entering these paintings. They are closed off, sealed like forbidden territories. The models are ecstatic, their eyes expressing no more than a fixed stare, frozen by their lack of flame, chilling icons of our living contemporaries. It is as if Brenda Zlamany were defining painting in general, and her own in particular, as "so near and yet so far." The inaccessible evidence marked out by these portraits are beacons and remainders at the same time — portraits of her own circle of friends, acquaintances as well as the inevitable authority figures.

Painted in the old-fashioned way, with a method she picked up from studying Flemish and Dutch Renaissance painting, the artist has reproduced these faces in minute detail. This she does not by reproducing a photograph in the way a hyper-realist would, but by attempting to get back to the instant captured by the photo and eliminating it. As she paints, Zlamany sets out to re-endow the face with immortality by trying to capture, within the painting, what went before the sitting. At the end of a lengthy undertaking that calls for a combination of application, patience, and alchemy passing through the prism of colors, Zlamany proposes halted images, austere poses, faces that have entered from the other side of the painting, the other side of art, worked by history (the quest for a technique from the past). If it were not for those artists, who, being creators, have had to step over their own dead bodies: moreso than Narcissus, the spectator would be able to see only the terrible expression of the blade of death.

Eddy Devolder

(Translated from French by Christopher Martin)



BRENDA ZLAMANY, PORTRAIT NR. 8, 1994.
OIL ON PANEL, 27 3/4 X 21 3/4".