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david ebony's new york top ten

Brenda Zlamany at jessica fredericks

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Brenda Zlamany used to frequent New York's morgues, making studies for paintings. Unlike other artists inspired by the morgue, such as photographer Andres Serrano, Zlamany was not so interested in the agents of death. She focused instead on the formidable vestiges of life that the dead manage to retain long after dying. She also made eloquent paintings of dead animals floating in formaldehyde. But in her work, she sought to give her subjects new life. In a way, she resurrected them, and her work was always life-affirming rather than morbid.

It is not surprising that Zlamany eventually turned to live models, although her approach to the subject matter has not changed all that much. On view in her excellent show in this Chelsea gallery are new paintings of snakes, lovingly portrayed in a manner recalling that of great Spanish masters like Zubarán. Most are painted against dark backgrounds, although a few are on colored grounds--my favorite was painted against bright red. Zlamany's snakes, suspended in an ethereal, abstract space, seem to strike a pose, and their sleek bodies form elegant calligraphic lines.



Brenda Zlamany,
Snake #9, 1996.