

HONORING THE ARTIST: BRENDA ZLAMANY

Artist Brenda Zlamany is not one to hide her head in the sand. She appears to be an intelligent, caring person who knows all too well the realities of life, especially these unpredictable and tenuous times. Even so, her favorite subjects have been and continue to be innocent children and the even more innocent past. Perhaps that's why Ms. Zlamany's cover this week seems particularly welcoming: a reminder of the things that give us nourishment and hope for the future.

The cover is a signature piece, a portrait of Alva at age eight, the daughter of Ms. Zlamany's dealer. The girl is dressed in a party dress, recalling not only a young child's favorite clothing but marking a time and place when there is only joy and peace in the world.

Ms. Zlamany suggests another reason for her attraction to this kind of subject matter: "I used to paint bald men; I wasn't into hair for the first five years of my painting. I went from bald men to babies," she says with a mixture of respect and

humor. She quickly adds, however, that her very favorite subject is her own daughter, Oona.

But Ms. Zlamany does more than merely convey an image/setting based on her favorite subjects. She is also drawn to the way objects produce a greater context. "I love to paint the children with their toys, the mystery around these toys. I start to create and explore a story about these things," she says with apparent gusto.

It's apparent that Ms. Zlamany explores other subjects as well, with the same sensitivity and storytelling: landscapes. "In the early 1990s, I went to Vietnam," she explains. "I went alone; I wanted to prove I could do it." Ms. Zlamany not only proved she could go it alone (despite some scary moments in Cambodia), but she was also able to guide her art in another direction.

"Even though I can relate to portraits, it was a relief to get away from them. Landscape is more abstract; it's very liberating to create them," she says.

But why Vietnam for landscape? "My parents always talked about it during the 1960s," Ms. Zlamany responds quickly. "I also liked the idea that Vietnam had patterned landscape." (Another factor, no doubt, is the fact that she speaks French.)

We get the impression that Ms. Zlamany was no tourist during her three months in Vietnam when she notes that she would go all over the country, hiring a driver/guide to take her into the mountains.

Ms. Zlamany's non-tourist travels have taken her to Africa as well, and although she has created a lot of material, like watercolors and photographs, she has yet to do a series on the country. "I'm into my people phase now," she reminds us. "The faces of children can show the whole weight of the world or incredible joy."

—Marion Wolberg Weiss

For more information about the artist's work, contact Ms. Zlamany's representative, Graham Leader, at 516-356-0994.