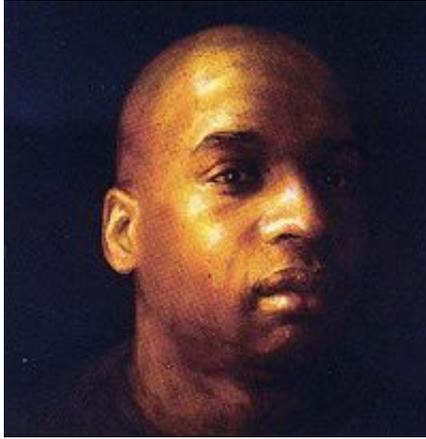


**THE SKIN & BODY  
OF LOOKING**  
by John Yau



Portrait #2 (Glenn Ligon), 1993  
Oil on panel, 20 x 14 inches

At once sensual and remote, insistent and reserved, tactile and reflective, Brenda Zlamany's stark yet opulent paintings compel the viewer to reconsider the nature of, as well as the desire for, representational images. In this regard, she is as much a representational painter as are Vija Celmins, Chuck Close, Gregory Gillespie, Mark Greenwold, Alex Katz, or Catherine Murphy, all of whom have thoroughly reenvisioned aspects thought to be inherent to abstraction (all-over, gridded, minimalist, and gestural composition). What Zlamany shares with these intensely strong, older artists is a highly focused concern with the relationship between looking and knowing, image and tactility, and subject matter and paint. The emotionally complex shifts between the frozen time of paint and the passing time inhabited by the body are very much at the core of Zlamany's work. For more than a decade, she has worked in modes such as portraiture and still life in order to speculate upon, as well as to dissect, the nature of representation. In recent years, she has added landscape and sculptural objects to her oeuvre.

Less about the immediacy of seeing than about looking as a form of examination, Zlamany synthesizes a wide range of diverse techniques not only to prolong the viewer's engagement with subject matter, but also to transform it into a disturbingly paradoxical state of both wonderment

and aversion. This latter aspect of her work not only sets her apart from both the older generation of artists and her peers, but, despite the coolness of her work, it also unexpectedly connects her to artists such as Alice Neel, Otto Dix, and Ivan Albright, all of whom were interested in distortion and decay. That Zlamany's affinities with these artists is not a matter of style, for she certainly isn't an expressionist, should underscore the degree to which she has developed a wholly original approach to subject matter. Seldom has decay been painted so lucidly, and certainly by no one else in Zlamany's generation.



Snake #9, 1996  
Oil on panel, 15 x 15 inches



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