

## 888: Portraits of Taiwan

Exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei

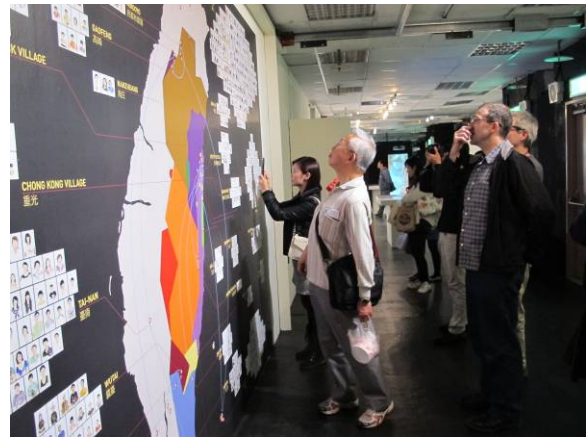
January 19–February 29, 2012

Brenda Zlamany's "888" (2011–12) is a multimedia installation that incorporates aspects of traditional artwork (portraiture; watercolor), performance art (living the production of the work; enlisting strangers to participate; ritually photographing them with the finished portrait), and conceptual art (production according to quotas and timetables; the recursive inclusion of the painted portrait in a new portrait when the subject is photographed holding it).

The exhibition consists of the following elements.

### The Map of 888: Taiwan

A mural-size map charts the locations where the portraits were made. The distribution of Taiwan's indigenous tribes is highlighted. All 888 portraits are shown in thumbnails and are connected to the places in which they were painted.



### Virtual Talking Sketchbook

An interactive virtual sketchbook allows the viewer to see the 888 portraits on a monitor by swiping the screen to turn the pages. Selected portraits automatically talk, allowing the viewer to hear stories about the subjects and about the situations in which the paintings were created.



### **888: Portraits in Taiwan**

A fifty-four-minute documentary video shows the portraits being painted throughout Taiwan. The video is available online: [vimeo.com/35855480](https://vimeo.com/35855480).

### **888 Watercolor Portraits**

Displayed in cases are fourteen Moleskine books each containing sixty portraits in watercolor and pencil on watercolor paper and one Moleskine book containing forty-eight portraits in watercolor and pencil on watercolor paper. Each of the portraits is dated, beginning on July 4, 2011, and ending on September 27, 2011.



### **Subjects Posing with Their Portraits**

Larger-than-life projections of photographs each show a portrait subject holding a sketchbook open to his or her portrait. The projections surround the viewer and run continuously. This installation is accompanied by Bunun mortar-and-pestle music.



### **100 Signatures**

One hundred photographs shown on five monitors record the moment when the subject takes a pencil to sign the completed work.



### **Performance Workshop**

Zlamany painted portraits of visitors in the gallery during the weekend of the opening. These paintings were installed as they were made, eventually filling a wall.

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“888” documents Zlamany’s recent project “Creating a Portraiture of the Indigenous Inhabitants of Taiwan.” From July 1 to September 30, 2011, supported by a Fulbright grant, Zlamany traveled in Taiwan, primarily to aboriginal villages. She made watercolors of the people she met, using the camera lucida, a device for drawing that dates back to the Renaissance and promotes a two-way exchange between artist and subject.

The idea for this project came from an observation she made after painting portraits of nomads and monks during a trip to Tibet: when she hung the completed portraits of Tibetans near her recent portraits of New York artists, the artists appeared to reach out to the viewer, while the viewer was pulled into the portraits of the Tibetans. This contrast between “external” and “internal” gazes seemed worthy of further exploration. She chose the Taiwanese aborigines because they are somewhat removed from the mainstream culture. But as she traveled from village to village, she noticed that the line between aboriginal and Taiwanese is not always clear, and the project became more inclusive. Eventually all people living or working in Taiwan became potential subjects.

Each portrait with the camera lucida took around ten minutes to complete. Zlamany aimed to make ten portraits a day. Traveling with her ten-year-old daughter, a fluent Mandarin speaker, helped her persuade strangers to participate. Each subject enjoyed signing his or her portrait and being photographed with it. The signature, an important part of the image, stamps the work as a collaboration. As word of the project spread on the island, it had a unifying effect. People were introduced to one another by flipping through the sketchbooks. While painting in remote places such as Lanyu, Wutai, Chingchuan, Yilan, and Wulia and in major cities in Taiwan, she had wonderful adventures and developed a personal connection to each subject. She chose 888 as the final number of paintings because of its significance in Chinese culture.

The place of the painted portrait in the postphotography, postmodern age is ever-changing. In

portrait painting, a connection between the artist and the subject is created by the act of building an image stroke by stroke. This connection is unusual (and perhaps longed for) in a time of virtual reality and high-speed, mediated experience. There is much to be explored in the question of who is portrayed and how. "888" addresses the multifaceted nature of portraiture in the digital age. By combining painting, performance, interactivity, photography, a conceptual frame, and a digital presentation, "888" challenges schisms in artistic as well as social understanding.

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## **Brenda Zlamany**

### **Selected One-Person Exhibitions**

2012: Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei  
2007: Jonathan O'Hara Gallery, NYC  
2002: Art Upstairs @ GHB, East Hampton, NY  
2001: University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
1998: Stux Gallery, NYC  
1996: Jessica Fredericks Gallery, NYC  
1995, 1993: Sabine Wachters Fine Arts, Brussels  
1994: Galerie Quintessens, Utrecht  
1994, 1992, 1991: E. M. Donahue Gallery, NYC  
1989: Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo, NY

### **Selected Group Exhibitions**

2011: Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, "American Realism"  
2011: Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, "Face to Face"  
2010: Galerie Hübner & Hübner, Frankfurt, Germany, "Tiere/Animals"  
2010: Nicolaysen Art Museum, Casper, WY  
2007: Salmagundi Club, NYC, "The Beholder's Eye"  
2006–07: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington  
2006–07: National Museum in Gdansk, "New Old Masters" (curated by Donald Kuspit)  
2006: Geoffrey Young Gallery, Great Barrington, MA, "Likeness"  
2005: DFN Gallery, NYC  
2004: DFN Gallery, NYC  
2003: Marella Arte Contemporanea, Milan, "Supereal"  
2003: Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT  
2002: Artists Space, NYC, "Painting as Paradox"  
2002: Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, CO, "POPjack: Warhol to Murakami"  
2002: New Gallery, Houston, TX  
2000: Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent, "The Pillow of Melancholy"  
2000: Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, Gainesville, FL, "The Swamp: On the Edge of Eden"  
2000: New House Center for Contemporary Art, Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island, NY, "The Figure: Another Side of Modernism"  
1999: Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, CO  
1999: Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg, PA, "Changing Nature: New Visions and Altered

Lands”

- 1999: Jim Kempner Fine Art, NYC, “Contemporary Portraiture”  
1999: New Langton Arts, San Francisco, CA, “In Your Face”  
1997: Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, “Von Kopf bis Fuss: Fragmente des Körpers”  
1997: Stux Gallery, NYC, “Sex/Industry” (curated by John Yau)  
1997: John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI, “In Memory of Pleasure”  
1996: Betsy Senior Gallery, NYC, “Locale”  
1996: Apex Art, NYC, “Ceremonial” (curated by Barry Schwabsky)  
1996: James Graham and Sons, NYC, “Portraits”  
1996: Jessica Fredericks Gallery, NYC, “Everything Is Real”  
1995: University of Massachusetts, Amherst, “Nature Studies”  
1995: Zoller Gallery, Penn State University, University Park  
1995: Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY

### **Selected Commissions**

- 2005: Portrait of Osama bin Laden. “Taking Stock of the Forever War,” by Mark Danner. *New York Times Magazine* (11 Sept.). Cover.  
1996: Portrait of Marian Anderson. “Grace under Fire,” by Jessye Norman. *New York Times Magazine* (24 Nov.).  
1995: Portrait of Jeffrey Dahmer. “Staring into the Heart of the Heart of Darkness,” by Ron Rosenbaum. *New York Times Magazine* (4 June).

### **Selected Bibliography**

- 2011: Richard Tobin. “‘Face to Face’: Gerald Peters.” *ARTnews* (Summer): 132.  
2010: Lilly Wei. “The Great American (Male) Nude.” *ARTnews* (Dec.): 82–85. Illus.  
2009: Alix Finkelstein, “New Directions in Children’s Portraiture.” *Fine Art Connoisseur* (Nov.-Dec.).  
2007: Joshua Rose. “Brenda Zlamany: The Art of Seeing.” *American Art Collector* (Apr.).  
2007: *Brenda Zlamany: Facing Family*. 36-page catalog of recent works. Conversations with Vincent Desiderio and Alex Katz. New York: Jonathan O’Hara Gallery.  
2007: *New Old Masters*. Essay by Donald Kuspit. Gdansk: Natl. Museum in Gdansk.  
2004: Donald Kuspit. *The End of Art*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.  
2003: Alessandro Quattordio. “Supereal.” *Flash Art* (Dec. 2003–Jan. 2004).  
2001: *Brenda Zlamany: Color Study*. 42-page catalog of recent works. Interview with Chuck Close. Essay by John Yau. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts.  
1999: Donald Kuspit. “Going, Going, Gone.” *Artnet.com* (16 Sept.).  
1999: Brenda Zlamany. “Painter of Modern Life.” *aRude* 12.  
1998: *Brenda Zlamany*. 48-page catalog of recent works. Essay by John Yau. New York and Los Angeles: Stefan Stux Gallery and Muse [X] Editions.  
1998: “Brenda Zlamany.” *New Yorker* (21 Dec.).  
1998: Douglas F. Maxwell. “Brenda Zlamany at Stux Gallery.” *Review* (1 Dec.).  
1998: “Brenda Zlamany, Pheasant, Dove and Duck (1997).” *On Paper* 2.2 (Mar.-Apr.).  
1997: Barry Schwabsky. “The Rustle of Painting.” *The Widening Circle: Consequences of Modernism in Contemporary Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.  
1996: “Brenda Zlamany.” *New Yorker* (25 Nov.).

1996: David Ebony. "Brenda Zlamany at Jessica Fredericks." *Artnet.com* (20 Nov.)  
1995: Eddy Devolder. "Brenda Zlamany at Sabine Wachters." *Flash Art* (Oct.).  
1993: Barry Schwabsky. "Brenda Zlamany / E. M. Donahue Gallery." *Artforum* (Feb.).

### **Selected Grants and Fellowships**

2011: Fulbright Fellowship  
2010: New York City Department of Transportation, Jersey Barrier Initiative, mural designer  
2010: Artists' Fellowship, Inc., grant  
2006–07: Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant  
1997: Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY  
1995, 1992, 1986: MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH  
1994: New York Foundation for the Arts Artists' Fellowship: Painting

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