

West 104th Street

BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

www.bloomingtondale.org

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SEPTEMBER 2018

SPOTLIGHT

An Artist in the Age of #MeToo

Zhen Guo's Bold Feminist Vision

By Joyce Mann

New York-based artist Zhen Guo lives at 309 West 104th Street with her husband Robert Weinberg and daughter Tian. The Chinese-born artist graduated from the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now the China Academy of Art). There she trained in the meticulous craft of Chinese traditional arts. She began her artistic career in the wake of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, the movement that was Mao Zedong's effort to retool Chinese society by forcibly relocating urban residents, including artists and intellectuals, in the rural countryside.

After becoming a teacher at the same academy where she received her formal training, in 1988 Zhen eventually emigrated to the U.S. with her first husband to re-establish her career in New York City. Life in a new, Western city led her to rediscover her identity as an artist. She began producing work influenced as much by Western pop culture and postmodern narratives as by her Chinese heritage.



Q: Where in China were you born?

A: In the coastal town (nowadays considered a small city) called Rizhao, about halfway between Beijing and Shanghai. I lived there with my father, a government official, my mother and my younger sisters and brother. Back then, everyone knew everyone else.

Q: How did the Cultural Revolution influence your life and your art?

A: In 1966, when I was only 11, I didn't understand what was happening but suddenly my father was chased out of town by the Red Guard and we had to leave our home. My grandmother had a heart attack and died from the stress, and we had to walk with her dead body in a wagon over 15 miles to the countryside, to bury her outside her hometown. After about 6 months into our exile, the Red Guard realized that it needed people to manage the new order, so my father was rehired and we were allowed to go back to Rizhao. But some things had changed dramatically. For instance, schools were closed to everyone except the most elite and privileged from 1966-1977, barring me and my siblings from early education.

continued on page 4

Bag Bargains and Build Community Spirit

Come visit the 29th Annual West 104th St. Yard Sale on Sept. 29

At the 29th Annual West 104th Street Yard Sale, you can join more than 1,500 bargain hunters as they explore a cornucopia of cut-rate merchandise, celebrate our community, enjoy live music, and take a chance on a raffle worth hundreds of dollars.

Get up early that Saturday morning, and you'll hear the muffled hustle of an army of local residents setting up their displays of gently used clothing, jewelry, furniture, household items, toys, and collectibles. When you step out your front door, you will see more than 60 stalls lining the curbsides from West End to Riverside and displaying the second-hand treasures of neighbors ready to welcome your bid. Strolling up and down the block, you will find yourself captivated by the never-ending drama of hundreds of buyers and sellers at full throttle.

For more bargains, visit the following stands sponsored by our Block Association . . .

"What-A-Bargain." Dig your way through table after table cluttered with pre-owned bargains including jewelry, knick-knacks, kitchenware, toys, unopened personal care products, embroidery kits, and more.

Book Sale. Browse a large selection of used volumes, including novels, plays, poetry, history, biography, children's books, cookbooks, atlases, and dictionaries, as well as CDs.

Silent Auction. Bid on antiques, vintage collectibles,



Reserve Your Vendor Space Now!

Get your own 10x8 foot slot to sell your jewelry, collectibles, kitchenware, household items, clothing, toys and more! Please log on to www.bloomingtondale.org or call Gary Waskow at 212-932-9082.

continued on page 5

IN THIS ISSUE:

Yard Sale Previewp. 1
 Zhen Guo Profilep. 1
 Block Financialsp. 2
 Where on This Block?p. 2
 Annual Meetingp. 5
 Block Plantingsp. 5
 Composting Primerp. 7

Contributors to the September Issue:

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W 104 ST BLOCK ASSN FINANCIAL REPORT

July 2018

Opening Balance \$21,198.38

Income

Dues..... \$450.00

Expenses

Guard service..... \$3277.00
 Web hosting (annual) \$503.28

Closing Balance (7/30/18) +\$17,668.10



WHERE ON THIS BLOCK?


The first person to send Steve Zirinsky an email with the correct location of this architectural detail will win one of the West 104th Street Block Association’s new totes!
 Email Steve at Steve@Zirinskyarch.com.

West 104th Street Block Association Board

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An Artist in the Age of #MeToo

continued from page 1

Q: So how did you survive?

A: At age 15 I was sent to work in a sewing factory earning 16 yuan per month, equivalent to about \$3. At that time, the early 1970s, farmers and factory workers were considered the most honorable new Chinese citizens, those who would lead the revolution. Scholars were considered “too Western” and corrupted by capitalism. Working at the factory was necessary to support my family. Interestingly enough, it has re-entered my life as the central medium of my newer fabric and needle based work.

Q: How did you develop your interest in art, then, without being in school?

A: Another one of my factory jobs was to paint propaganda posters telling people to “stand together” and other slogans. I realized that I loved the process—watching the ink sink into the rice paper—and I was good at it, too. Of course, no original thinking was tolerated; it was simply mass reproduction. For instance, I once painted two new mothers nursing two little babies, and on the ground I painted a hen with several chicks. I was told I was encouraging people to have more than one child and that I had to stop.

Q: How did you finally come to study art?

A: In 1973, Deng Xiaoping, a senior official, made sweeping changes, allowing everyone to take tests and go to school. With education newly permitted, I decided to pursue art, which was against my parents’ wishes. They wanted me to study engineering. I ran away from home at 18 to study in the Shandong Art School with Yu Xining—a traditional artist who had inspired me when he visited Rizhao to paint years before. It was under his guidance that I formally studied Chinese traditional art and trained for the Zhejiang Academy—China’s most prestigious art school—in 1978. There, I was one of just two women in a class of fourteen. In fact thousands had applied, as it was the end of the Cultural Revolution and China’s doors were opening to a deluge of Western information and culture. Students of my generation were collectively breathing fresh air for the first time in many years. Four years later I became a teacher at this same renowned school.

Q: What would you say is the guiding philosophy of your art?

A: “Be true to yourself.” In my art life, there was a period of time during my first marriage when I lacked direction. The work I was making was simply to please other people, the art market, and to make money for my family. The Chinese tradition is strongly patriarchal: the man is everything and the woman is unimportant. As a result, I sacrificed my career and my passion so my husband, also an artist, could build his critical reputation. I surrendered myself in this way for many years, but I always knew that artists should paint what they believe in. Now, being true to my values is the central focus of my work.

Q: Your website mentions many places in the US where you studied art, including San Francisco, LA, Toronto, and New York. What was life like for you here?

A: When I arrived in the United States with \$39 in my purse and no real contacts or connections, it was true culture shock. In China, I had been a teacher in a high ranking art school, a person respected and admired. Here, no one knew me. I had no connections, no money, and little English language skill. And the university was disappointing. The schools all required that we study English first, so I had no time to devote to my art.

Q: What artists did you find most interesting once you were here?

A: I was especially shocked by the work of Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg, because they used found objects in their art. It never occurred to me that you could do that. It was amazing to me.

Q: Your art has really focused in recent years on feminist issues. I assume it’s in part a reaction to your second class status as a woman in Chinese society and of course that same issue is very relevant nowadays, too.

A: I always admired the work of Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith, who focus on women’s empowerment. For a long time, I didn’t realize a woman’s value as an individual, independent, contributing member of society. I didn’t understand that you can do both: take care of your family alongside pursuing your passion. Chinese

society made me a wife, a daughter, and a sister—not an artist.

My work nowadays uses the image of women as warriors and focuses on the breast, the body part that is most associated with women. A woman’s breast has many different uses beyond nursing. She is very proud of them and keeps them secret. They demonstrate her youth and health and disclose her aging. They are her strength and her vulnerability. This body part is full of emotion and intimacy and sensitivity but at the same time they bear the most pain and the sadness of deterioration. They also resemble the shape of the Chinese worker “coolie” hat, a traditional shape. I also do breast sculpture installations using clay, fabrics, ceramics, etc.

Q: Your website, www.zhenguoart.com, shows examples of forms other than painting that you do, including mono prints and video art.

A: I am primarily a painter, but some concepts need different showcases. It’s also important and interesting as an artist to try new things and move in new directions.



Guo with her constructions.

continued on page 5

Bag Bargains and Build Community Spirit continued from page 1

posters, photographs, paintings, theater tickets, household items in their original boxes, services (piano lessons, baking, etc.), and gift certificates from favorite local restaurants and stores.

Bake Sale. Select a delicious dessert fresh from your neighbor's oven. If you would like to bake, please contact Alex Grannis at 212-316-1644 or Lynn Max at lynnendermax@gmail.com or 917-355-7771.

When you need a break, you can tap your foot to live music performed by veteran New York musicians. Returning this year are the classic rock duo Foley Road (James Weatherstone and Kurt Emmerich), the mellow Joe Giglio and his pals, and the amazing Motown marvels Shailah and the Shaylettes. Don't forget to pick up a ticket for our famous 50/50 raffle. Last year, the first-prize winner took home \$1,825. This year, the first-prize winner will again receive half of the total pot; the second-prize winner will take home \$100; the third-prize winner, \$50.

Through your generosity, you and your neighbors make possible this annual celebration. If you have spare items or time, we welcome your donations:

"What-a-Bargain:" Please contact Joyce Mann by email (joycemann2@gmail.com) or phone (home: 212-721-6341; cell: 516-238-4609) and arrange a convenient time for you to deliver

your items to 309 West 104th Street, which is the apartment building in the middle of the block on the north side of the street. Joyce will welcome your donations between September 20 and 27. Please do not leave items with the doorman of any building.

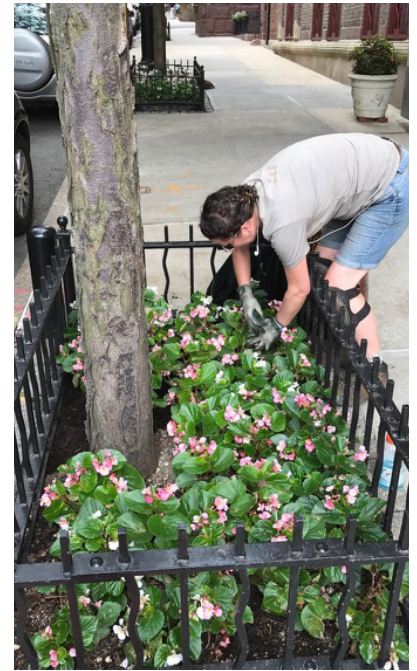
Book Sale: Please pack your donation in bags marked, "Yard Sale," and leave them with the doorman of 320 Riverside Drive (the building on the north corner) between September 14 and 26. Please, no textbooks, journals, magazines, theses, LPs, or books about baby care, computers, or self-help.

Silent Auction: Please contact Hanna Rubin at Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net. or 212-865-4579. She will help find a happy home for your neglected valuables.

Donate your time: Do you have an hour to lend a hand at the Silent Auction, "What-a-Bargain," Book Sale, Bake Sale, set up, or break down? Please contact Hanna Rubin at Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net. or 212-865-4579.

One-hundred percent of your donation benefits our neighborhood. One-hundred percent of your purchases help ensure a safe, well-maintained block with a helpful guard, seasonal flowers, and trees providing summer shade.

BEGONIAS BRIGHTEN THE BLOCK



Urban Explorations planted pink and white begonias in the block tree beds in early June, and returned several weeks later to mulch the beds.

Annual Meeting Features Look at Riverside Park Improvements

The West 104th Street Block Association held its annual meeting on May 16 at Anshe Chesed. A presentation by Riverside Park Conservancy followed welcoming remarks by board president Steve Zirinsky and a report from the treasurer, Barbara Boynton (see photo). Nina Webb, a Conservancy staffer, described the Conservancy's Park Tender program, a way for volunteers to be-



come involved in the park and tend a specific area in their neighborhood. She also shared highlights of recent renovations in the immediate neighborhood. The bird sanctuary, which runs from 116th to 124th Streets, has been the focus of a reforestation

effort that began 1997. Invasive species have been removed, and plants that appeal to birds, like sumac and elderberry, have been established. The woodland areas near our block from 108th Street to 116th Street are also the subject of a restoration that began in 2013. The Conservancy is gradually removing small, invasive undergrowth, composting and planting native wildflowers and ferns, and trimming back of the top canopy to let light filter through. For more information, go to www.riversideparknyc.org.

An Artist in the Age of #MeToo

continued on page 5

Q: I know you travel to China two or three times a year to work there, too. What's that experience like?

A: In 2012, I created a small charity in honor of my father. Based in my hometown Rizhao, the charity aims to help young kids stay in school and give them some early exposure to art. So I regularly go back to China every year to work on this, and at the same time participate in some art shows.

While back in China for extended periods of time, I realized that the Chinese art world is stuck in an era where a woman's art works are not highly valued and feminist art is rarely understood. I felt obligated to introduce something different.

This year, I curated an International Feminist Art Exhibition in Changsha, China. I invited 8 foreign artists and 8 Chinese artists to show their feminist art works together. The main idea was to demonstrate how feminist concepts are different from other women's paintings. This show received a positive response.

About the feminist idea: I feel strongly that nobody can deny it is women through whose pain the human race is continued. Women bear the most basic, most original, primitive pain of creation—childbirth—and female art preserves that true beauty in its fight for women's voices to be heard. This is my—and all contemporary women artists—responsibility.

COMMONLY REQUESTED COMPOUNDING IDEAS

- Boric Acid Suppositories
- Hydrocortisone Suppositories
- Ibuprofen Suppositories 100mg / 200mg
- Progesterone Suppositories
- Hyaluronic Suppositories for vaginal dryness
- Hormone Creams for men and women
- Pain Creams
- Nipple Ointment for breastfeeding
- Hydroquinone 6% Fading Cream
- T3 - T4 Thyroid Hormone Capsules
- Nitroglycerin .2% Ointment for Anal Fissure
- Nifedipine 2% Ointment
- Diltiazem 2% Ointment

***Topical Creams (in Lipoderm Base) for nausea, vomiting, pain, fever for adults and children
We can formulate or reduce dosages on commercially available tablets or capsules.
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ABCs of Composting

The basics of turning organic matter into good stuff



As more buildings on the block offer residents a composting option, neighbors have asked the West 104th Street Block Association for more info on how to compost, and where to deliver compostable material if their building does not participate in New York City's composting program. Here is a primer, courtesy of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and other sources.

According to GrowNYC, an environmental non-profit that fosters New York's green markets, food makes up 21% of New York City's garbage. Left on its own, all organic matter will eventually break down into nutrients that can be absorbed by plants. Composting is simply a way of helping things along by including the right ingredients in the right proportions under optimal conditions. Follow these guidelines to produce compost faster and without odor or pest problems.

You can put these materials in your compost container:

- fruit scraps
- breads and grains
- coffee grounds and filters
- tea bags
- eggshells
- old potting soil
- cut flowers
- food-soiled paper (napkins, paper towels)

Don't add these materials to your compost container:

- dairy products
- meat scraps
- fish scraps
- fats or oils
- grease
- dog feces
- kitty litter
- weed seeds
- charcoal ash
- nonorganic materials

What can I compost?

Most plant-based organic material, including fruit and vegetable scraps, can be composted at home under the right conditions. You can put scraps in a large yogurt or other covered plastic container, or you can invest in a compost pail from a housewares store. You may want to put a layer of shredded newspaper at the bottom of the container to help with odors.

Layering and Mixing

Aim to have roughly equal parts "green" (nitrogen-rich) and "brown" (carbon-rich) materials. All organic materials contain carbon and nitrogen in varying proportions. In general, wet, or green, materials such as fruit and vegetable scraps or coffee grounds contain a higher proportion of nitrogen than dry, or brown, materials such as used paper goods like napkins and paper towels, or leaves.

To create ideal conditions for composting, try to include roughly equal parts of both and layer or mix the materials in your pile. A pile with more browns will still turn into compost, but it will take longer. If you add too many greens, your pile may generate odors.

To avoid odors or pests, bury food scraps under browns such as leaves or used napkins.

Using Compost

If you have ever used peat moss, wood chips, manure, or topsoil to garden, then you already know how to use compost. Mix compost into flower and vegetable beds; blend it with potting soil to revitalize indoor plants. Use coarser compost as a mulch around trees and shrubs.

Originally Published by Brooklyn Botanic Garden (bbg.org). Used with permission.



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WHERE TO DROP OFF COMPOST

If your building does not participate in New York City's composting program, here are several local options for dropping off compostable materials.

- Compost on the Go, 110th Street and Central Park West: year-round, Wednesdays, from 6:45am-10:15am
- Columbia University Green Market, Broadway @114th St.: year-round Thursdays, 8am-3pm; Sundays 8am-1pm
- 97th Street Greenmarket, 97th St. between Columbus & Amsterdam Aves., year-round Fridays, 8 am-2pm

BLOOMINGDALE AGING IN PLACE

(BaiP) Bloominplace.org
 BAiP is an intergenerational volunteer network of neighbors working to help older residents to continue living at home safely and comfortably. BAiP sponsors social and cultural activities, provides educational tools, and a helping hand for those in need through its Neighbor-to-Neighbor (N2N) program. The latter takes the form of providing help going places, running errands, light shopping, accompaniment at home or outdoors, and information. If you want to contact N2N for this kind of assistance, or to talk about volunteering, e-mail: N2N@bloominplace.org, or call: 212-842-8831 to leave a message with your contact information. Either way, a BAiP member will respond promptly.

COMPUTER CONSULTANT/PC DOCTOR

Computers repaired, maintained, viruses removed, junk mail controlled. Advice to repair or buy. I do Windows!
 Contact Greg Williams, block resident at 212-749-2398, 917-771-2929, or prosolutions@stny.rr.com,

MATHEMATICS TUTORING

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 Henry 212-666-0396

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YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE PUBLICIZED FREE!

Publicize your neighborhood service (babysitting, dog walking, apartment cleaning, etc.) free in the newsletter and on our web site for one year, renewable. To submit an ad mail/deliver this information to Hanna Rubin 315 RSD or send to Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net
 For our records: Your name and mailing address
 For publication: Your name, contact method (phone or email address), description of your service.

The block association board meets once a month.
 We enjoy having residents attend the meetings.
 Please let us know if you would like to attend one and we will send you an invitation.
 steve@zirinskyarch.com

Call for Safe Escort Home With Block Guard

If you're ever coming home at night and you'd like to have an escort, please don't hesitate to call Osbourne Thomas, our security guard. He has a special phone for these times, and he will come to meet you either on West End Avenue or Riverside Drive and walk with you to your home.

Security Guard Phone Number:
347-723-1517

2018 3rd Quarter Dues:

Please allocate my contribution to: _____ Amount of check: _____

Security Beautification Social Newsletter Board Decision (Suggested amt: \$40/quarter or \$160/year)

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. No. _____

E-mail Address _____ Phone _____
 (For internal use only. The Block Assn. will not sell, exchange, or lend your e-mail address to any outside parties.)

Suggestions for the block: _____

Make checks payable to West 104th Street Block Association Inc.
 Please send to our treasurer: Barbara Boynton: 905 WEA, #71, NY, NY 10025 or leave with one of the following:
 M. Mann: 309 W. 104, Apt 3A G. Waskow: 320 RSD, Apt. 8G
 J. Howitt: 315 RSD, Apt. 8C