

Zhen Guo: Chroma Comes from the Margins

September 10, 2023–January 21, 2024 at the Derfner Judaica Museum
Reception and Artist's Talk: Sunday, October 15, 1:30–3 p.m.
Guided Tour with Curator Emily O'Leary: Thursday, November 30, 6 p.m.



Zhen Guo, *The Momentum of Spring*, 2022. Ink and oil pastel on rice paper, 27 3/4 x 54 3/4 in. (139 x 71 cm). Courtesy the artist.

Derfner Judaica Museum + The Art Collection at Hebrew Home at Riverdale is pleased to announce our fall exhibition, **Zhen Guo: Chroma Comes from the Margins**, which will be on view from September 10, 2023 through January 21, 2024. A reception and artist's talk will be held on Sunday, October 15, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. In addition, a curator-led tour is planned for the evening of Thursday, November 30, at 6 p.m. Both events will take place in the Museum, located at 5901 Palisade Avenue in the Riverdale

neighborhood of The Bronx, and are free and open to the public. R.S.V.P. 718.581.1596, art@riverspring.org or [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com). Photo I.D. required for admission.

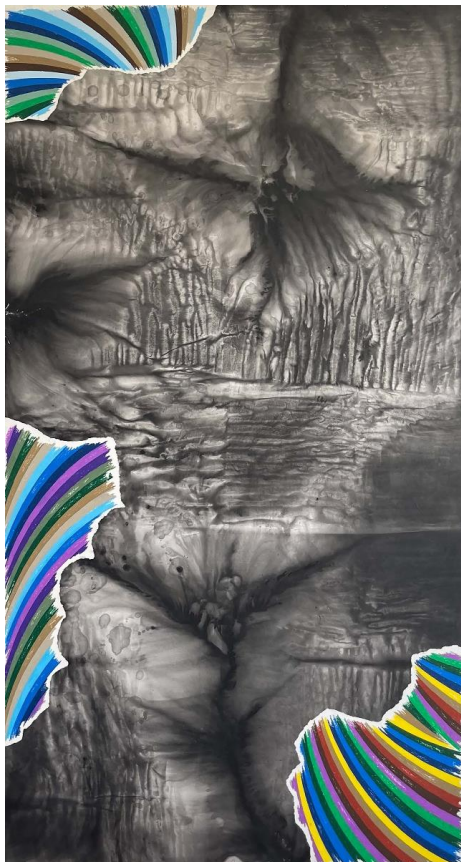
Zhen Guo: Chroma Comes from the Margins features ten recent large-scale ink paintings on rice paper, some with brightly colored stripes in oil pastel, a neon light installation, and a seven-minute film by Chinese feminist artist Zhen Guo. Her newest paintings evolved from a series of black and white, semi-abstract landscapes that Guo titled *Muted Landscape*, a body of work she began in 2016 that alludes to the marginalization of vulnerable people and places—in this case, women and the environment—and the experience of being silenced and effaced.

Intentionally eschewing the strong lines characteristic of traditional Chinese ink painting, the *Muted Landscape* works are amorphous, monochromatic plumes that suggest the contours and crevices of the female body and the natural world. Guo achieves this effect by diluting the ink with water and softened brushstrokes. She describes the final compositions as “abstract images, as if seen from far away, softened and defaced.”

At the end of 2022, Guo began experimentally inserting bold stripes of color into these monochromatic landscapes, describing the directional shift as a “need for change” and the introduction of a Western modernist element to break with traditional Eastern ink art. The vivid chroma that originates at the paper's edges intersects and visually disrupts the landscape, which, in turn, suggests the interruption of silence and suppression. The new paintings also reflect Guo's affinity for bright colors and patterns,



Zhen Guo, *Chasm*, from *Muted Landscape*, 2019. Ink on rice paper, 38 9/16 x 33 7/8 in. (98 x 86 cm). Courtesy the artist.



Zhen Guo, *Breezing the Body*, 2022–23. Ink and oil pastel on rice paper, 77 1/8 x 37 7/8 in. (196 x 96 cm). Courtesy the artist.

which was partially influenced by having grown up near a mountainous region of China where colorful, elaborate clothing intended for special occasions or for children was ubiquitous.

As a self-described feminist, Guo draws from her personal history to explore concepts of oppression, misogyny, and harm. Her experiences as a woman raised within the strictures of Chinese patriarchy, an immigrant adjusting to a new country where she had to establish her career anew despite being a formally trained and accomplished artist in the People's Republic of China, and a survivor of domestic violence are also reflected in her work.

Guo suffered a long period of physical, emotional, and creative hardship after coming to the United States in 1986. At the expense of her own career, she financially supported her then-husband, an artist and fellow faculty member at the prestigious China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, after he joined her the following year in San Francisco, while he learned English and worked to establish himself in the art world. Following a devastating divorce and other traumatic life events, Guo's subsequent journey toward feminism and self-empowerment is best described by the title of a personal essay she wrote in 2020, "I Stood Up From the Ruins: How I Became a Feminist Artist."

After all these experiences, the paintings in this exhibition, injected with saturated bands of color, suggest fresh possibilities, new ways of thinking, and resilience—a vivid chroma that originates from the literal and figurative margins and cuts through the gray, degraded landscape.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Gail Levin, Distinguished Professor of art history, fine and performing arts, American studies, and women's studies at Baruch College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

About the artist

Zhen Guo is an artist and curator born in Rizhao, People's Republic of China, in 1955. She lived her early years during the "Cultural Revolution," when China was dominated by political turmoil and the arts were repressed. After graduating from the prestigious China Academy of Art in Hangzhou in 1982, she was invited to join the faculty as the first female teacher in the Chinese painting department since the Cultural Revolution. Guo immigrated to the United States in 1986 to study at the San Francisco Art Institute in California, leaving behind her family, status, and position to freely pursue her artistic vision.

Guo has participated in over one hundred solo and group exhibitions in the United States and internationally. Her work has been shown in such venues as WhiteBox, New York, New York; Mana Contemporary Art, Jersey City, New Jersey; Today Art Museum, Beijing, People's Republic of China; Interchurch Center Gallery, New York, New York; Inselgalerie, Berlin, Germany; Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, Staten Island, New York; Connecticut College, New London, Connecticut; and Jeonbuk Museum of Art, Jeonbuk, South Korea. She lives and works in New York City.

Museum hours: Sunday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Photo ID is required for all visitors to the Hebrew Home campus. Call 718.581.1596 or email art@riverspring.org to schedule a visit, in-person or virtual group tours, or for holiday hours. For further information, visit our website at www.derfner.org.

About Hebrew Home at Riverdale

As a member of the American Alliance of Museums, the Hebrew Home at Riverdale by RiverSpring Living is committed to publicly exhibiting its art collection throughout its 32-acre campus, including the Derfner Judaica Museum and a sculpture garden overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades. Derfner Judaica Museum + The Art Collection provides educational and cultural programming for residents of the Hebrew Home, their families and the general public from throughout New York City, its surrounding suburbs and visitors from elsewhere. RiverSpring Living is a nonprofit, non-sectarian geriatric organization serving more than 18,000 older adults in greater New York through its resources and community service programs.



This exhibition is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.