



Stages for Flowers, in progress at the studio.

The Art of Change

L.A. ceramic artist Bari Ziperstein deepens her commitment to equity and justice through her fine artwork and BZippy company

by **JESSICA RITZ**

As in all aspects of her art and design practice, Bari Ziperstein is committed and diversified when it comes to social justice.

Over the past year, she dug more deeply into questions about “how diverse are the university art programs, and what does that say about the professional art world of Los Angeles?” Unpacking these issues also touches upon broader questions of access, and the specific challenges associated with ceramics, which is a particularly resource-intensive medium.

The urgency to push for greater inclusivity and catalyze difficult conversations in part shape her fine art. It also influences how Ziperstein’s nurtured BZIPPY, the design goods business side of her studio operation, from which the newly established BZIPPY Fund has evolved. This initiative is a way for Ziperstein to address the opportunity gaps that historically characterize arts education and the commercial art world.



PHOTO BY SCOTTIE CAMERON.



Her politics and unabashed feminism have always been close to the surface and literally embedded in her work. She maintains a longstanding relationship with the Wende Museum in Culver City; she's conducted extensive research in its archives, using propaganda posters, texts and textile patterns as historic and creative sources for ceramics that contain powerful messages of resistance and progress. Ziperstein has exhibited there, too.

This fruitful partnership is reflected in the imagery and ornament incorporated into her recent output, *Stages for Flowers*, an outdoor ceramic sculpture located on the campus at UC Riverside. She also contributed pieces to *Vessels*, a group show on view from February through April at the Nina Johnson Gallery in Miami.

Meanwhile, the BZippy line focuses on producing tabletop ceramic objects and larger-scale functional items and sculptural furniture, from formidably weighty side tables to Brutalist-inspired planters. The Future Perfect represents Ziperstein's limited-edition collectible goods, and the Charles Moffett Gallery in New York City represents her art. Interior designers including Oliver Furth, Kelly Wearstler and Pamela Shamshiri have commissioned custom creations.

When it comes to strategically using resources to

meaningfully engage with matters of racial justice and equity, "our company can't do it all, but there are people who are doing it already and we want to support them," Ziperstein says. So collaborations are key. She served as a jury member on the Female Design Council's Grant 01 program dedicated to emerging Black womxn designers. The BZippy Fund helped financially sponsor the project and has underwritten the SCULPT Scholarship for the unconventional Infinite School founded by Julia Haft-Candell. Ziperstein is cultivating various long-term, post-pandemic goals and other experimental endeavors. For the first BZIPPY Print undertaking, she commissioned a ceramics-inspired speculative sci-fiction piece from queer theorist, curator and professor Andy Campbell, which is printed on a 2,000-edition poster.

Ziperstein recognizes this level of commitment requires patience. Instead of making pronouncements while the hashtags are still trending, Ziperstein and her team have been developing the BZippy Fund "over the past year with the goal of channeling a specific, targeted and authentic vision."

"It's not going to all happen overnight," she adds. "The lived experience has to be a thoughtful process."

Stages for Flowers, 2020
(Stoneware, underglaze
and glaze - 96 x 25) in
progress. shown at the UCR
Campus. Photo by Stan Lim,
Photography Manager, UCR.

