



# Meet Your Neighbor

*Excerpt from 40W77 Spring 2026 Newsletter*

## Spotlight on Elizabeth Kirkor Rogers (4C)

*by John Kiker*

Elizabeth Kirkor Rogers does not simply paint New York—she animates it. Her watercolors bustle with life. Indeed, when asked what draws her to a subject, beyond a landmark or a familiar street scene, her answer is immediate: “I think it’s the little people—the guy on the bicycle, the delivery guy... most of my paintings have things going on.”

That sense of movement and humanity sits at the heart of her work. Inspired by classical artists like Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Elizabeth fills her scenes with narrative detail—tiny, often humorous moments tucked into corners. A man dozes beside a bookstand; a child rides high on a parent’s shoulders; a dog claims a fire hydrant. “All the things that go on in the street... interest me,” she explains.

Nowhere is that spirit more alive than on her own block. Since moving into 40 West 77th Street in 1990, Elizabeth has drawn deeply from the rhythm of the Upper West Side. She delights in “the old buildings with the funny attics and the gables,” lamenting the sameness of modern towers. “They hurt the soul,” she says with characteristic candor.

Her connection to the city runs deeper than aesthetics—it is rooted in a remarkable life journey. Born in Warsaw into a politically prominent family, her early childhood was shaped by war and displacement.

As a toddler, she fled Poland with her family, traveling through Romania, Italy, France, and England before arriving in New York, where they settled in Forest Hills. After the war, she, her mother, and brother were reunited with her father in Highgate, North London, where she lived for seventeen years.

Elizabeth is largely self-taught, and her artistic path unfolded organically. She began painting in earnest in the early 1980s, first taking commissions and gradually returning to what she loved most: the



▲ *Elizabeth Kirkor Rogers, under the cherry blossoms of AMNH*



energy and storytelling of Manhattan street life.

Recognition followed. A painting of the New York Stock Exchange led to commissions and postcard designs. The Plaza Hotel followed. Over time, her work appeared in places as varied as Bloomingdale's, the Circle Line, and even the United Nations, where pieces were sold to benefit UNESCO.

One of her favorite paintings is of the beloved institution Zabar's. Sitting on a bench along Broadway, she sketched the scene as it unfolded: shoppers streaming in and out, a bookseller dozing beside his display, cyclists weaving through foot traffic, dogs underfoot, and the city's endless improvisation all around her.



▲ Zabar's artwork by Elizabeth Kirkor Rogers

Zabar's purchased the painting for their office and later reproduced portions of it above their prepared foods section—and eventually onto shopping bags and a magnet. Elizabeth was amused. Her daughter-in-law, however, pointed out that Elizabeth still held the copyright to the image. Eventually, without legal counsel, Elizabeth approached Zabar's and asked, modestly, for a \$200 food voucher. She received one for \$400.



Her creativity extends beyond painting. In her self-published book *Watercolors and Whimsy*, she pairs her illustrations with playful limericks—meant, she insists, to be read “in a certain rhythm... otherwise they just sound silly.”

At 40 West 77th, Elizabeth has also helped shape the life of the building itself—supporting the garden beds, volunteering on committees, organizing gatherings, and, during one hot summer, even helping care for newly planted city trees across the street. It is exactly the kind of generous act that could have come straight out of one of her paintings.

For Elizabeth, life, as in her art, is not about grand statements but about noticing. “Always do something... that you can put your heart into,” she advises.

“Don’t lose that—that’s your inner spark.” In her work, that spark is unmistakable—alive in every street corner, every passerby, every “little person” she brings to life. And that spark still shines in Elizabeth. ■

**For more of Elizabeth’s art and  
limericks...**

Visit her new website featuring artwork and  
limericks from her book, *Watercolors & Whimsy*.

<https://elizabeth.kirkor.com>



**WRITER’S NOTE:**

*My husband, Dan, and I have happily called 40 West 77th Street home since 2004. We have long loved the people, the building, the staff, and our wonderful location—but it has been quite some time since I’ve had the pleasure of meeting someone as vibrant, talented, and delightful as Elizabeth Kirkor Rogers. Spending time with her, learning about her work, and hearing her stories was a true joy. We are fortunate to have her as both a neighbor and an artist in our midst.*  
—John Kiker (17C)