

# The New York Times

## Washington Heights My Landlord, My Curator

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*The Guiding Star Medallion  
created by Laurence Groux*



TO Adrian Longo, a building is a blank canvas. While not a painter, Mr. Longo has transformed the family business — three five-story yellow brick apartment buildings in Washington Heights — into what he calls living galleries, places that celebrate his love of pictures and, believe it or not, his tenants.

What with his unironic mustache, Mr. Longo, 61, doesn't look like an art dealer. But when he took over the buildings, on 170th Street near Broadway, in 2004, he noticed the original picture moldings on the walls inside. And he said to himself, "Wouldn't it be really great to put some art in here?"



His efforts began with a pair of acrylic paintings of a toga-clad couple by a Chinese street artist who was parked outside the Toys "R" Us near Mr. Longo's home in Woodside, Queens. He placed the works in the lobby, in one of the picture moldings. Soon, to fill the spaces beyond the moldings, he was blowing up magazine photographs of performers like Olivia de Havilland, combing the housewares section of Marshalls department store for art, and browsing at street fairs.

But Mr. Longo also follows an artistic plan, tailoring his acquisitions to the backgrounds of his tenants. For example, he decorates the hallways of residents from island nations with sparkly fish, carved wooden lighthouses and other nautical images. A tenant from Nigeria has African statues in her hallway, and on a landing near one couple's apartment is a photograph of their wedding in 1953.

"He gives landlords a good name," said **Laurence Groux**, one of his admiring tenants.

Mr. Longo also takes photographs of his residents and displays their portraits in the lobby. (One of his favorites: the superintendent's son. "He was wearing this nice suit and I said, 'Robert, just smile,' and I got him — boom.") Other photographs, blown up to two feet by three feet, capture his neighborhood and various subjects of interest, including waitresses at Hooters and the lions at the New York Public Library.



*Mr. Longo is a patron as well, having hired Ms. Groux three years ago to be his in-house artist. Since then, he has commissioned 17 murals, and Ms. Groux has filled the foyers and the spaces below the stairs with depictions of the four seasons, a series of birds of New York and an idyllic scene of Fort Tryon Park.*

The best thing about the murals is that they can't be stolen, although occasionally other artworks disappear from walls and halls. "They walk away," Mr. Longo said. "I know the tenants don't take them; it must be visitors."



Although Mr. Longo declined to specify how much money he had invested in his venture, he said that if he had his way, he would devote himself full time to amateur curating. "I haven't finished yet," he said. "But I can't go overboard. I have repairs and maintenance."