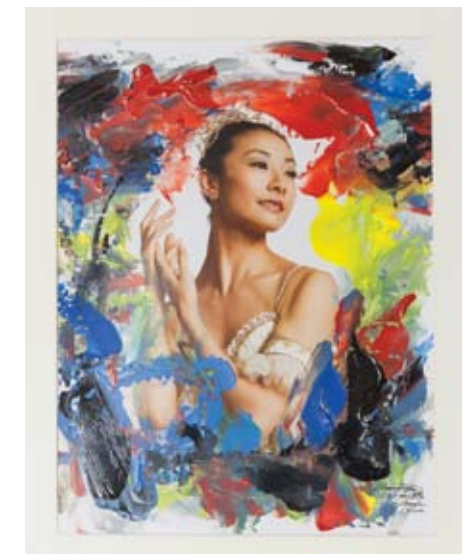




# Yuan Yuan's World

THE COLLECTED TREASURES OF A 20-YEAR DANCE CAREER, FROM CHINESE ART TO FRENCH WINE. BY LAUREN MURROW

WHEN STAGE AND STYLE ICON YUAN YUAN TAN moved from Shanghai to San Francisco in 1995 as a 17-year-old soloist for the San Francisco Ballet, it was her first time in the United States. "I was desperately homesick that year," she remembers. She threw herself into her training, going on to become the youngest principal dancer in the history of the S.F. Ballet and the first Chinese-born principal in any international company. Now celebrating two decades with the S.F. Ballet, Tan—nicknamed YY, by friends—is a rarity in the dance world: a performer who melds the classical technique of the West with the artistry of the East. "My Chinese side comes out in my dancing," she says. "There's a certain in-the-moment sentimentality, an appreciation for the smallest details." But Tan, who has graced the pages of *Vogue* and *Esquire*, is no ballet-bound ascetic: The writer Joyce Maynard describes her as "Audrey Hepburn on pointe." She cops to a fondness for expensive heels and a great glass of wine; she collects both rare Chinese antiques and blingy cell phones. "I work hard; I deserve it," she says. Here, Tan shares her most cherished possessions—old tutus, lucky totems, and unworn heels among them—from her Westwood Park home. ■



- 1) "The tree in my backyard has hundreds of lemons on it right now—this is the lemon year. I slice them and coat them in honey."
- 2) "I like collecting cell phones, like this stainless steel and leather Vertu. It's sleek and chic and feels good in my hands."
- 3) "The first time that I traveled to Russia, I bought this hand-painted jewelry box that depicts the story of the Firebird—this mythical creature. I later danced the role of the Firebird in Yuri Possokhov's ballet."
- 4) "I love wine tasting in Napa. I don't have a huge collection, but the bottles I do have are special. I received this 1976 Château Haut-Brion for my birthday three years ago. I don't think I'll ever be able to bring myself to drink it."
- 5) "My mother knitted this cashmere sweater more than 10 years ago. It's a staple for chilly San Francisco nights. I'm often wearing it whenever I'm not in dance clothes."
- 6) "Annie Leibovitz took this photo of me and my partner for a 2003 issue of *Vogue*—I think it was the body image issue. I went straight to the shoot off a red-eye flight."
- 7) "I wore this tutu when I won the gold medal at the Paris International Dance Competition when I was 16. It's very simple and very old, but I keep it as a souvenir."
- 8) "I love to watch old movies when I get time off. I own the complete DVD set of all the Audrey Hepburn movies ever made."
- 9) "My friend Edward H. Lim is a contemporary painter in Shanghai. He recently gave me this piece, in which he painted over my photo."
- 10) "This oil painting was a gift from the famous Chinese artist Guan Zeju. These were the pointe shoes from my first full-length performance of *Swan Lake*."
- 11) "I have quite a collection of heels by Louboutin and Valentino, but I never get to wear them. Since I spend my days in pointe shoes, my feet always hurt."
- 12) "I have a huge jewelry collection. My auntie gave me this ring more than 10 years ago—I wear it every day. It's engraved with a Tibetan chant. I consider it lucky."
- 13) "I keep 20 years' worth of ballet programs and old ballet tapes on my bookshelf. At this point, it's getting pretty full."
- 14) "One of my friends gave me this traditional rooftop corner from a Chinese house, which I display on my fireplace mantel. I used to go antique hunting all the time in the East Bay."