



Judy Chicago (American, b. 1939). *The Dinner Party*, 1974–79. Mixed media: ceramic, porcelain, textile. Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation, 2002.10.
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Educator packet for the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art
***The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago**
at the Brooklyn Museum

The Dinner Party

by Judy Chicago

Description

The Dinner Party presents a ceremonial banquet for carefully chosen guests. Arranged on a triangular table measuring forty-eight feet on each side are a total of thirty-nine place settings. The “guests of honor” are designated by means of intricately embroidered runners, each executed in a historically specific manner; upon these are placed, for each setting, a gold chalice and utensils, and a china-painted porcelain plate rendered in a style appropriate to the individual woman being honored. The names of the other 999 women are inscribed in gold on the white tile floor below the triangular table.

Begun in 1974 and finished in 1979, with the help of hundreds of collaborators, *The Dinner Party* celebrates traditional female accomplishments such as weaving, china painting, embroidery, and sewing, which have historically been framed as craft or domestic art.

The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art was established through the generosity of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation. The Center is the home of Judy Chicago's landmark work *The Dinner Party* and presents exhibitions, programs, and research about feminist art.



Judy Chicago (American, b. 1939).
The Dinner Party (Margaret Sanger and
Natalie Barney place settings), 1974–
79. Mixed media: ceramic, porcelain,
textile. Brooklyn Museum, Gift of
the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation,
2002.10. © Judy Chicago. Photograph
by Jook Leung Photography

To Celebrate

For all students

Questions for Viewing

Describe *The Dinner Party*. List all of its various components. How is this table different from a kitchen or dining table?

Why did Judy Chicago title this artwork *The Dinner Party*? What do you see to support your answer?

The artist includes place settings for 39 different women. What objects does Judy Chicago include at every place setting? Are they all the same or different?

Why do you think Judy Chicago “invited” these individuals to her party? What would you overhear them discussing if the party took place?

Look closely at one place setting. Describe the different colors, shapes, lines, and textures. What materials do you see? Do you notice any symbols?

Who does this place setting belong to? Judy Chicago wanted to celebrate this woman's accomplishments. Why do you think this woman was invited to attend *The Dinner Party*?

Activities

Throw a Community Dinner Party

Nominate a woman in your own community to celebrate. Create an invitation for the party that includes the woman's name and the reason you decided to include her in the celebration. Don't forget to decorate the table! Include a banner, place setting, plate, and cup for each celebrant. How will these items represent the women you are celebrating? What will you serve? Plan a menu including food and beverages favored by the women you are celebrating.

Radio Show Host

Write a transcript of a radio show interview with women from *The Dinner Party*. What questions will you ask? Research each woman so you can anticipate what her answers would be. Dramatize your radio show.

History at the Table

For older students



Judy Chicago (American, b. 1939).
The Dinner Party (Anna van Schurman
place setting), 1974–79. Mixed media:
ceramic, porcelain, textile. Brooklyn
Museum, Gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler
Foundation, 2002.10. © Judy Chicago.
Photograph by Jook Leung Photography



Judy Chicago (American, b. 1939).
The Dinner Party (Virginia Woolf place
setting), 1974–79. Mixed media:
ceramic, porcelain, textile. Brooklyn
Museum, Gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler
Foundation, 2002.10. © Judy Chicago.
Photograph by Jook Leung Photography



Judy Chicago (American, b. 1939).
The Dinner Party (Georgia O'Keeffe
place setting), 1974–79. Mixed media:
ceramic, porcelain, textile. Brooklyn
Museum, Gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler
Foundation, 2002.10. © Judy Chicago.
Photograph by Jook Leung Photography

Look closely at these place settings.
Compare the colors, shapes, lines,
and textures used for each.

What materials do you see?

How are the place settings similar?

How are they different?

Compare the place settings for
these two women.

How does Judy Chicago's choice
of material and design address the
roles women had during these two
different periods in history?

Dutch artist, linguist, and
theologian Anna van Schurman
(1607–1678) wrote a book that
argued women should be educated
in all subjects, regardless of
professional activity or employment,
so long as their education did not
interfere with their domestic duties.
For its time this was a radical
position.

English writer Virginia Woolf
(1882–1941) authored stories that
centered on female characters.
She was critical of the absence of
women's perspectives in history
and literature.

Describe Georgia O'Keeffe's place
setting. Read the book *My Name is*
Georgia by Jeanette Winter.

How is her place setting similar
to the paintings described in the
story?

Why did Judy Chicago include
Georgia O'Keeffe as the most
contemporary guest to receive a
place setting at *The Dinner Party*?

Activities

39 plus 999

There are 39 guests of honor represented by place settings at *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago. The names of 999 women who are related to the 39 guests of honor by commonality of experience, historic contribution, time period, and/or geography appear on the Heritage Floor beneath *The Dinner Party*.

Choose the name of a woman that you do not recognize. Research this woman's biography and the period of history she lived in. Plan a place setting for her based on your research.

Up-to-Date

The Dinner Party by Judy Chicago was completed in 1979. Who would you invite to a dinner party for contemporary women? What criteria would you use to select your invitees?

Resources For Students

Hest, Amy and illustrated by Sheila White Samton. *Jamaica Louise James*. Cambridge, Mass: Candlewick, 1997.

Hoffman, Mary and illustrated by Caroline Binch. *Boundless Grace*. New York: Puffin Books, 1995.

Kroll, Virginia and illustrated by Katherine Roundtree. *A Carp for Kimiko*. Watertown, Mass.: Charlesbridge Publishing, 1996.

McCully, Emily Arnold. *Beautiful Warrior: Legend of the Nun's Kung Fu*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 1998.

Oneal, Zibby. *A Long Way to Go: A Story of Women's Right to Vote*. New York: Puffin Group, 1990.

Purdy, Carol and illustrated by Tim Arnold. *Least of All*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1996.

Tarbescu, Edith and illustrated Lydia Dabovich. *Annushka's Voyage*. New York: Clarion Books, 1998.

Wolfson, Margaret Olivia and illustrated by Juan Caneba Clavero. *Patient Stone*. New York: Barefoot Books, 2001.

Judy Chicago (American, b. 1939). *The Dinner Party* (Heritage Floor) (detail), 1974–79. Porcelain with rainbow and gold luster. Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation, 2002.10. © Judy Chicago. Photograph by Jook Leung Photography

