

# WOMEN OF YORK: “SHARED DINING”

A group of ten women incarcerated at York Correctional Institution in Connecticut, calling themselves “Women of York,” produced this work of art inspired by Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party*. *Shared Dining* echoes the structure of *The Dinner Party*, with entry banners and place settings, each composed of a plate, chalice, and runner dedicated to a woman of personal significance to the artist. Reflecting on the enduring power of Chicago’s iconic masterwork, the installation celebrates women’s historical achievements and acknowledges the continuing impact of feminism in the twenty-first century.

The artists have responded to the constraints of producing work within a correctional institution by repurposing pedestrian materials, playing on historical craft-based associations of art made by women. The table is accompanied by audio recordings of each artist describing her place setting and its meaning. An act of determined self-representation, *Shared Dining* uses individual narratives to raise critical questions about politics, gender, and incarceration.

Catherine J. Morris, Sackler Family Curator, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art

Stephanie Weissberg, Curatorial Assistant, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art

This exhibition is organized by Catherine J. Morris, Sackler Family Curator for the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, with Stephanie Weissberg, Curatorial Assistant, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum.

This exhibition is supported by

THREE GUINEAS FUND

Women of York: Cara, Chasity, Kelly, Lisette,  
Panna, Shannon, Shaquima, Tracie, Tricia, Yajaira

*Shared Dining, 2014*

Mixed-media installation  
Private collection

Tracie

### *Malala Yousafzai Place Setting*

Malala Yousafzai is the youngest Nobel Laureate in history, having received the prize in 2014 at seventeen years of age. Yousafzai is a women's rights activist from Pakistan who, in the face of threats from the Taliban, stridently fights for women's inalienable right to education. Her inclusion in *Shared Dining* serves as a reminder of the inequitable distribution of educational opportunities, which are markedly few in prisons.

In an exception to this prevailing lack of education for inmates, particularly in the arts, *Shared Dining* was produced over six months through a series of collaborative workshops grounded in dynamic group discussions. This situates Women of York within a lineage of feminist pedagogy and "consciousness raising" strategies originating in the 1960s.

Shannon

### *Eve Place Setting*

The portrayal of Eve in Judeo-Christian traditions as the first woman, who originated from man, makes her a powerful symbol for constructions of gender, sexuality, and morality that continue to resonate within contemporary culture. Collaging a magazine image of a sixteenth-century painting by the German artist Lucas Cranach the Elder as the central figure, the artist has modified the highly finished and idealized representation with the addition of loosely rendered and expressive sculpture. Eve's plate, the most dimensional of the ten, introduces a sense of playful adaptation through an exuberant and inventive use of materials.

## Entry Banners

Six painted entry banners accompany the place settings, once again mirroring the structure of *The Dinner Party*. The banners recite an optimistic vision for a more equitable future and create a transitional space for both *The Dinner Party* and *Shared Dining*.

Identical texts are emblazoned on both series of banners. However, where Judy Chicago delivered her message through handwoven tapestries, Women of York have painted on foam core, adapting the original designs by integrating elements from their own place settings.

# Audio Interviews

Photographs by Susan Meiselas

Audio by Susan Meiselas and Catherine Muther, a project of Three Guineas Fund

Use the iPad to hear the artists discuss the process of producing *Shared Dining* and the figures they have chosen to honor.

Information at this kiosk is also available at  
[www.brooklynmuseum.org/dinnerparty](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/dinnerparty).