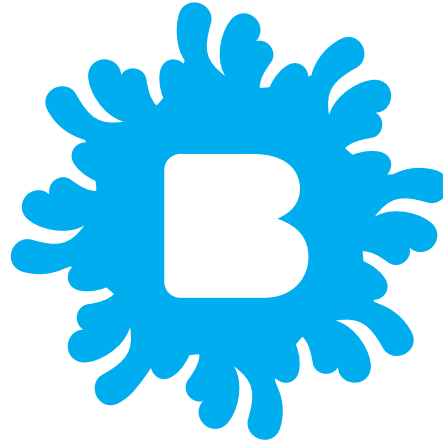


Press Release



August 2015

Women of York: "Shared Dining," a Collaborative Project Created by Incarcerated Women, on View at the Brooklyn Museum August 7 through September 13, 2015

Installation Inspired by Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* to Be Exhibited in the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art's Herstory Gallery

Women of York: "Shared Dining," a collaborative art project by ten women incarcerated at the high-security York Correctional Institution (YCI) in Niantic, Connecticut, will be on view at the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art's Herstory Gallery from August 7 through September 13, 2015.

Working under the moniker Women of York and inspired by Judy Chicago's iconic *The Dinner Party*, the group created *Shared Dining*, an installation that recognizes historical and contemporary women—including Eve, the Virgin Mary, Princess Diana, and Malala Yousafzai—who are of personal significance to the artists. Honoring each with a painted plate, chalice, and cloth runner mirroring the components of *The Dinner Party*, the settings were crafted from materials readily available or permitted within prison walls. Painted Styrofoam cups replace Chicago's ceramic gold and white chalices; paper napkins and sporks take the place of flatware and cloth napkins; and crocheted triangles of remnant yarn are deployed for the finely embroidered Millennium Triangles.

In a written statement, the artists explain: "We were moved to honor the women who have touched our lives. Our plates represent their strength, struggles, courage and achievements. These women are models of who we aspire to be. We have not been limited by the lack of resources; our imagination and creativity allowed us to turn commonplace objects into art."

The *Shared Dining* installation, whose title is a nod to the artists' lived experiences as incarcerated women, was produced as part of a workshop, conceived of and facilitated by Elizabeth A. Sackler, with assistance from retired YCI Library Media Specialist Joseph Lea and Sackler Foundation Program Director Rebekah Tafel. Susan Meiselas and Catherine Muther produced audio recordings of the women's stories, now an integral part of the *Shared Dining* installation. The voices of the incarcerated women bring presence to their absence.

"*The Dinner Party* is an iconic work commemorating women's achievements in all disciplines," explains Sackler, founder of the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, the permanent home of

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Judy Chicago's work. "The York workshop was designed to bring the idea of honoring and respecting women to those who signed up to participate. The achievement of *Shared Dining* underscores the crucial role that writing, art, and education play in rehabilitation, and we're thrilled to display the installation at the Museum."

On September 13, the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art will host a closing reception and a panel titled "Touching Humanity: Creativity and Transformation" featuring acclaimed author Wally Lamb, who has led a writing workshop at YCI since 1999. Presented as part of the ongoing Sackler Center series, "States of Denial: The Illegal Incarceration of Women, Children, and People of Color," the discussion will be moderated by Joseph Lea, and include Kelly Donnelly and Lisette Oblitas-Cruz, formerly incarcerated women who helped create elements of the *Shared Dining* installation.

Shared Dining was originally exhibited at the University of Hartford in May 2014, as part of the annual Prison Arts Program in Connecticut.

Women of York: "Shared Dining" 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 made possible by Three Guineas Fund, which promotes social justice for women and girls. Audio interviews with the artists and documentary photos were produced by Susan Meiselas and Catherine Muther, a project of Three Guineas Fund.

About *The Dinner Party*

The Dinner Party, an important work of 1970s feminist art and a milestone in twentieth-century art, is presented as the centerpiece around which the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art is organized. *The Dinner Party* presents a massive ceremonial banquet, arranged on a triangular table with a total of 39 place settings, each commemorating an important woman from history. The names of another 999 women are inscribed in gold on the white tile floor below the triangular table. This permanent installation is enhanced by rotating Herstory Gallery exhibitions relating to the 1,038 women honored at the table.

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