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Judy Chicago is Releasing a Line of Plates Inspired by Her Classic Feminist Work 'The Dinner Party'

By Sarah Cascone

April 4, 2018



The Prospect NY has released a new limited-edition collection of plates based on Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*.
Photo courtesy of the Prospect NY.

"Over the years, I've watch a lot of people get commissions to make dinner plates and I always thought, 'like *excuse me?*'" Judy Chicago said recently. The artist, of course, is best known for her massive feminist art installation *The Dinner Party*, which features 39 hand-painted ceramic plates representing an equal number of famous women. Somehow, she's never been asked to reproduce them.

Chicago was speaking at a dinner at Brooklyn's City Point complex, with guests sitting around a triangular table that purposely evoked the iconic work. At each place setting was a bone china plate based on designs from *The Dinner Party*, released this week by The Prospect NY.

It's the first time Chicago has made functional plates based on her most famous work. The limited-edition collection includes four of the original designs, specifically the one's symbolizing Queen Elizabeth I of England(\$135), the women of the Amazon (\$135), the Primordial Goddess (\$155), and the ancient Greek poet Sappho (\$155). The reverse of each plate features a written text by the artist about the subject.

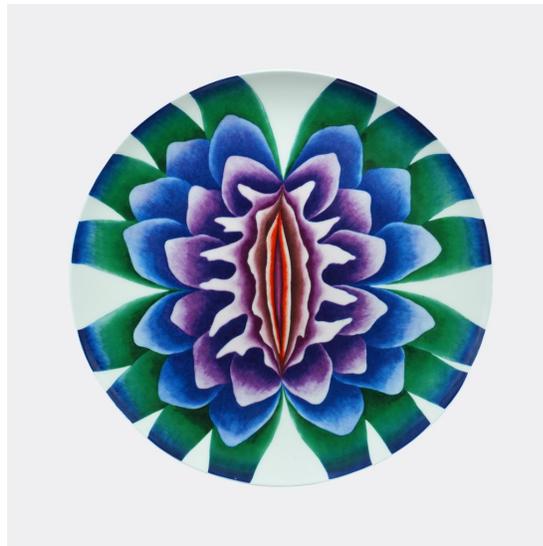
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Laura Currie, Jody Quon, Judy Chicago, Doreen Remen, and Yvonne Force Villareal with the Prospect NY's new plates based on *The Dinner Party*. Photo courtesy of BFA.

Producing the plates to Chicago's exacting standards was quite the challenge. "It was so difficult to do the color matching," Danielle Mayer of the Prospect NY told artnet News. It was Doreen Remen of the Art Production Fund that made the connection between the artist and The Prospect NY co-founder Laura Currie. The company is also producing a gorgeous silk scarf with a design dedicated to birth control activist Margaret Sanger, based on one of *The Dinner Party* table runners (\$225)

Perhaps most ambitious is a devilishly hard puzzle of the pattern of the platform upon which *The Dinner Party* sits, known as the Heritage Floor, which consists of hand-cast porcelain tiles with the names of 999 influential women inscribed in gold lettering. "It will allow people to piece together women's history," Chicago explained.



The Prospect NY has released a new limited-edition collection of plates based on Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*. Photo courtesy of the Prospect NY.

This is something of a moment for the artist, whose Brooklyn Museum show, "Roots of 'The Dinner Party': History in the Making," closed in January. "It was the first look at my creative process for *The Dinner Party*, forty years after I made it," said Chicago of the exhibition. "I always say, 'If you live long enough, you never know what will happen!'" Elsewhere, "Women House," a 21st-century reimagining of Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's seminal 1972 feminist art installation, *Womanhouse*, is currently on view at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC.

This week also marks the release of a new book based on the show, which was curated by Carmen Hermo of the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. The monograph is a joint project with Chicago's gallery, Salon 94. Chicago will be signing copies at the museum gift shop on Saturday, April 7, 12 p.m.–2 p.m.



Judy Chicago with her new book, her gallerist, Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, and one of her new plates from the Prospect NY. Photo courtesy of BFA.

Topping things off, *New York* magazine has unveiled a new magazine cover by Chicago, one of 50 designs by as many artists commissioned in celebration of the publication's 50th anniversary. It is currently on display on a billboard overlooking Brooklyn's Flatbush Avenue, and on 14 large-scale LED displays at City Point.

Chicago based her magazine cover on a skateboard that she painted at the behest of a friend, in exchange

for a donation toward replacing the lighting system for *The Dinner Party* ahead of the recent exhibition. The artist decided to paint a second skateboard for herself—not realizing that the underbelly of the deck is usually the part decorated with artwork, Chicago painted the griptape-covered top of the board itself—placing it in front of the Manhattan skyline for *New York*.



Judy Chicago with a poster of her magazine cover design for *New York* magazine. Photo courtesy of BFA.

The resulting image, in warm pink and red tones, is instantly identifiable as Chicago's work, but the use of the skateboard had some unintended consequences, she admitted: "I could not believe it. Somehow, my vaginal image got translated into a phallic form! I decided it was a metaphor for how difficult it is to change things!"