

# Art | Basel Miami Beach

DECEMBER 2018



**SIMONE LEIGH**  
A STAR IS BORN

**JUDY CHICAGO**  
TAKES OVER  
THE ICA

**FAIR HIGHLIGHTS**  
ABRAHAM  
CRUZVILLEGAS  
INAUGURATES  
THE GRAND  
BALLROOM

# THE LOCAL AFTERPARTY CHICAGO

After decades as an outsider to the art world, the prescient artist Judy Chicago is the talk of the town with a survey exhibition opening this week at Miami's Institute of Contemporary Art, a conversation at Art Basel Miami Beach and a museum show of all new work planned for the nation's capital in 2019. By Laura van Straaten

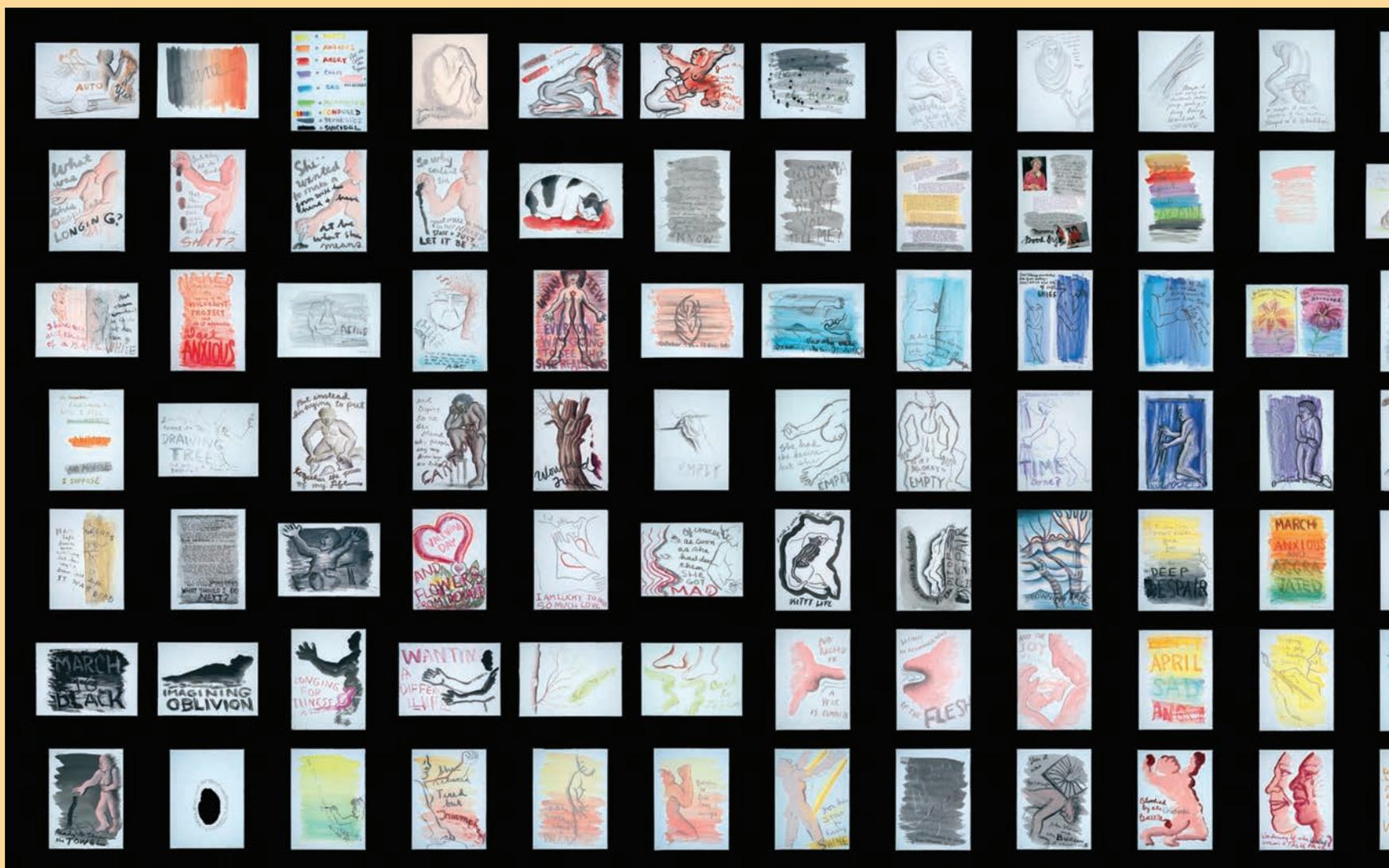
Judy Chicago in *The Dinner Party* china painting studio, Santa Monica, Calif., 1972



PHOTO © JUDY CHICAGO/ARTIST RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK, PHOTO COURTESY OF THROUGH THE FLOWER ARCHIVES

# LONG-AWAITED FOR JUDY





# “Voice”

—who has one, who doesn’t, who is trying to find hers and what or who is keeping her from doing so—has long been a preoccupation of feminism, as it has for the artist Judy Chicago, who will celebrate her 80th birthday next summer, and whose voice was for many years largely excluded from the dialogues happening in the art world.

But Chicago’s voice has recently been discovered by new audiences eager to hear what she has to say. Earlier this year, she was a cover girl of sorts for *The New York Times’ T Magazine* and one of *Time* magazine’s “100 Most Influential People.” Next, she has three big solo shows, one opening this week at Miami’s Institute for Contemporary Art, one in the works with dealer Jeffrey Deitch (a first-time collaboration) and an exhibition of all new work at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Plus, there’s the publication next fall of a major monograph.

“The art world is not a sprint; the art world is a long haul,” Chicago says, with a smile and just a hint of a sigh.

“She is one of the leading artists of her generation, and of course she has such an enthusiastic public and she’s made a big impact, but in terms of entering into the inside art world, that’s really just happening now,” says Deitch. His exhibition of Chicago’s work in his new Hollywood gallery next fall, combined with the shows over the past several years mounted by gallerist Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn of New York’s Salon 94, and Jessica

Silverman, whose eponymous gallery is based in San Francisco, will, as Deitch puts it, help Chicago to “catapult over the wall,” especially with private collectors.

“I look for important voices that could use a bit of amplification, and a shift in context,” says Greenberg Rohatyn. “Judy became famous for one body of work (*The Dinner Party*)—yet has spent years exploring male power, birth, extinction and more. Now maybe people will listen a little more,” because Chicago has long been “expressing sentiments that are widely acknowledged now in this political moment.”

I’d been warned that Chicago’s telltale voice can intimidate. When I first hear it emerge (from her mouth impastoed in Goth-y red-black lipstick), it rings nasal, Midwestern and friendly, despite her many years living in the Western U.S. Of course, it was this very accent that, in her years in Los Angeles after earning an MFA from UCLA, earned her the nickname that Chicago (née Cohen) famously turned into her nom de guerre. (Fittingly, she currently is part of MCA Chicago’s group show ‘West by Midwest,’ examining the connections between artists with Midwestern ties and West Coast culture, through Jan. 27.)

Perhaps I find her voice friendly since it reminds me of my own flat vowels. Having been urged by her loyal handlers to read her memoir before our interview, she is visibly delighted when I reveal we were born on the same day at the very same hospital nearly 30 years apart and that the first home I knew was two blocks from her family’s, just off Lake Shore Drive on the Windy City’s Near North Side.

Earlier this year, when Chicago received an honorary doctorate from





Clockwise from top left: Judy Chicago, *Birth Tear/Tear*, from the 'Birth Project,' 1985; *Birth Hood*, 1965/2011; *Autobiography of a Year* (detail), 1993-1994; Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., Sept. 27, 2018; Chicago's *Three Faces of Man*, from 'PowerPlay,' 1985.

certain households, for nearly four decades. The show is curated by Alex Gartenfeld and Stephanie Seidel.

"The ICA show has a very specific thesis," Chicago explains. "What Alex was interested in was looking at my move from abstraction to representation." At the beginning of her professional career, Chicago created a significant body of artwork that was minimal, assiduously avoiding the figurative.

"There was just no way for a woman artist or an artist of color or an artist of shifting gender to openly make art that revealed who they were," she tells me. "Everyone had to paint like white guys"

But the more Chicago embraced feminism, the more she veered toward figuration and a commitment to depict the not depicted. That, she reveals, was her fight. She was able to do this, she says, because "I am a classically trained artist and I started out working from the model and from still lifes."

Johanna Fateman, in a catalog for 'A Reckoning,' writes, "Before her rebirth as a feminist artist, she had mastered the technical skills (autobody painting, boat building and pyrotechnics) necessary to realize polished works stylistically aligned with the industrial bent of her Los Angeles milieu—artists of the distinctly butch Finish Fetish and Light and Space movements." Those talents are on view at the ICA, which pulls from six of the artist's series, including lesser-known artwork, some on public view for the first time in decades. But, Fateman continues, "Chicago arguably threw it all away by casting her lot with women...." And Chicago did so by embracing not just the figurative, but more visibly

content-based artwork—in direct opposition to the prevailing aesthetic of what was commercially viable. Chicago prophetically describes that shift to Fateman: "Unless women faced their circumstance as women on their canvases as well as in the courts, nothing fundamental would change."

The ICA exhibition also considers some of her most important work around gender, like the 'Birth Project' (1980-1985), depicting the process of giving birth, which Chicago says she was shocked to see largely missing in Western art. There is also her 'PowerPlay' (1982-1987), a series of paintings examining the male ego and abuses of power, which Greenberg Rohatyn described in particular as "just so perfect for the moment." Indeed, during the U.S. Supreme Court confirmation hearings earlier this fall, Chicago Instagrammed a mashup of faces from 'PowerPlay' and the angry faces made by nominee Brett Kavanaugh and Senators Chuck Grassley and Lindsey Graham. It quickly went viral.

*The Dinner Party* (1974-1979), which is tragically referred to as a "seminal" installation in some of the ICA's press materials, is represented in the current show only by test plates Chicago created. But that's a welcome omission since *The Dinner Party*, which is the centerpiece of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, has long overshadowed Chicago's other bodies of work.

Relatedly and importantly, the ICA exhibition concludes with *Autobiography of a Year* (1993-1994), 150 works on paper in which the artist explores her relationship to identity and failure.

BIRTH TEAR/TEAR, BIRTH HOOD AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YEAR PHOTOS © JUDY CHICAGO/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK, PHOTO © DONALD WOODMAN/ARS, NY, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST SALON 94, NEW YORK, AND JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO; THREE FACES OF MAN PHOTO © JUDY CHICAGO/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK, PHOTO © DONALD WOODMAN/ARS, NY, COLLECTION OF THE PALMER MUSEUM OF ART; BRETT KAVANAUGH PHOTOS © ANDREW HARRIK/POOL VIA ZUMA WIRE, © WIN MCNAMEE/POOL VIA ZUMA WIRE AND © JIM BOURG/POOL VIA ZUMA WIRE; OPPOSITE PAGE: MORTALITY PHOTO © JUDY CHICAGO/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK, PHOTO © DONALD WOODMAN/ARS, NY, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST; SALON 94, NEW YORK, AND JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO; JUDY CHICAGO AND JEANNE GREENBERG ROHATYN PHOTO BY HAGOP KALADJIAN/BFA.COM

The End Annihilation Bereavement Cessation  
 Darkness Demise Departure Destruction Blackness  
 Eradication Eternal Rest Exit Extinction Fin  
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The End

Judy Chicago 2015

From top: Judy Chicago, *Title Panel: Mortality*, from 'The End: A Meditation on Death and Extinction,' 2015; Chicago and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn.

Next September, an entirely new body of Chicago's work called 'The End: A Meditation on Death and Extinction,' will premiere at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. 'The End' will comprise more than 40 new paintings on porcelain and black glass, plus two new large bronze sculptures. Nearly a third of the artworks depict her imagination of her own demise. "It started because in 2011 I thought I was really sick, like, really sick," Chicago recalls. "I've always lived in the reality and knowledge of death," but suddenly, "I started thinking about dying and the way it's been depicted historically." Her ailments turned out to be less serious than she'd feared, but by then the idea for 'The End' had been hatched.

Chicago has been contemplating how humans are killing the planet, the impact of humanity on other animals and what will happen when Earth is no longer inhabitable. "I have long felt that human beings are a scourge on the planet," she says. Those considerations were shaped in part by conversations Chicago had with the esteemed philosopher and humanities scholar Martha Nussbaum. "I called her up cold," Chicago recalls. Nussbaum is now contributing an essay to Chicago's upcoming monograph, to be published by Scala next fall.

Greenberg Rohatyn is thrilled by the new work because it's her firm belief that Chicago should not simply be treated "as a historic artist but as a fresh new voice with a lot of old wisdom." In the current psycho-personal-political climate, when each day brings new revelations of men's violence toward and mistreatment of women, as Greenberg Rohatyn puts it, "I think it's time; it's Judy Chicago time." •

