Lori Esposito

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Exhibition Visit- The Dinner Party

I saw Judy Chicago’s “The Dinner Party” at the Brooklyn Museum’s Elizabeth A.Sackler

Center for Feminist . Each place setting at a tremendous and triangular 48 foot table represents

a significant female figure throughout history. On the table, there are thirty-nine hand painted

ceramic plates depicting a styled graphic distinct to each woman represented. Painted brightly

and showing an elaborate vulva. This permanent installation at the Brooklyn Museum brought a

lot of controversy in the past due to its motifs as depiction of genitalia. Many galleries refused to

show it.although it completed a very popular nine year international tour in 1979 San Francisco.

The Dinner Party appealed to my appreciation for direct, even provocative, interpretations of

woman’s body; I liked how each plate speaks to Chicago’s perception of each woman.

My favorite plate was for Sacagawea, which was geometric in its design, with blue, indigo,

and yellow that were not too bright or elaborate. It was not three dimensional like Virginia

Woolf’s or some other pieces. I wondered why only some plates received this treatment of three

dimensionality, but i could not deduce any possible reasons.

I felt a need to mourn or somehow pay my respects to the women represented by the plates, as

if the exhibition was almost religious or ceremonial. The exhibition room was like a

dark cathedral, or a shrine honoring a deity. Judy Chicago was clearly passionate about women’s

rights, and in creating this piece, she successfully expressed her feminist ideals and goals,

demanding that“there are successful in history women and they should be honored.”

I disagree with a review from critic Hilton Kramer, who called this piece “Kitsch” [[1]](#footnote-0)in a sense

that it was tacky. Kitsch it rarely memorable, and there is a generation of women who remember

vividly the first time they walked into this exhibition and were awed by its message, the

presentation, and the striking design and colors. Like those women, I loved the designs portrayed

and monumental nature of the creation, Another critic Alice Walker, judged Judy Chicago

negatively for not representing more women of color. [[2]](#footnote-1) I was surprised I did not immediately pick

up on this aspect of the art myself, but I was reflecting instead in terms of women and art,

nevertheless it is an unfortunate matter that she did not represent more non white females.

Chicago may simply have only wanted to depict the women who meant something to her on a

personal level.

I would actually want to own these pieces as decorative plates to hang on the walls of my

home, or at least revisit this installation on a regular basis. I believe Chicago’s creations can

truly incite inspiration when in need for a confidence booster. Reminders of strong women, who

have achieved great successes and made their place in history in male dominated history, despite

their metaphorical vulvas on dinner plates, can never be too few.

1. Kramer, Hilton. "Art: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party Comes to Brooklyn Museum." *The New York Times*. October 17, 1980. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Jones, Amelia (2005). *The "Sexual Politics" of The Dinner Party*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)