

# VOGUE

*Judy Chicago's Dinner Party Gets The Dior Couture Treatment*

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When Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party" opened at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1979, the response was, to put it mildly, wild.

Most art critics panned the installation, which features three 48-foot-long tables assembled in a triangle shape, set with 39 places, each dedicated to a laudable woman in Western culture, each painted with variations on a vulva. The *New York Times* called it "very bad"; the *Boston Globe* "unappetizing". The *Village Voice* complained it was "a sort of black mass of Feminism"; *Newsweek* decreed there was "too much message, not quite enough art". The *Los Angeles Times* called it "a lumbering mishmash of sleaze and cheese."

It was meant to go on a multi-venue tour, but after the backlash, most museums freaked and subsequently cancelled. Still, the exhibition drew record-breaking crowds – and some hailed it as the feminist masterpiece it is now recognised to comprise.

Today, *The Dinner Party* permanently resides at the Brooklyn Museum's Sackler Center, where it has been viewed by over 1.5 million people. Chicago's dream of making a work so large that it could never be erased has been realised: she has been accepted and assimilated into the pantheon of art history, as one of the most audacious (and popular) artists that ever lived.

Now, Chicago's installation has been given the couture treatment, courtesy of Dior, who collaborated with the artist for its spring/summer 2020 show. After Chicago's structure, "The Female Divine", first designed in the late 1970s but never realised, was installed at Paris's Musée Rodin, filled with 21 hand-appliquéd and embroidered banners, it served as the show venue for Dior's fashion collection informed by goddesses. Then, as night fell, a handpicked selection of guests came back for a modern version of "The Dinner Party", hosted inside the womb-like mauve chamber.

Debate still rages over the women who claim a place – though not a seat – at Chicago's Dinner Party table. Virginia Woolf, Georgia O'Keeffe, Sojourner Truth and Empress Theodora of Byzantium are among the chosen guests for her groundbreaking artwork. Last night, though, she was content to be seated next to Bianca Jagger on a long table studded with purple iris and anemone flowers and set with purple plates of her own design.



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Further down the table, guests including Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Alexa Chung, Haley Bennett and Kristin Scott Thomas, dined on scallop and citrus flower carpaccio, royal sole in sea butter caviar, and “light-as-a cloud” clementine crêpe, a menu conceived by the Michelin-starred French chef Michel Guérard.

Those seeking ice-breaker conversation topics need only have looked to the tapestries hanging from the ceiling, handmade by female students from the Chanakya School of Craft, a non-profit organisation based in India that teaches traditionally male artisanal techniques to women: “Would God be female?”, asked one. Surveying her creation, Chicago was thrilled. “The fact that we’re at the Rodin Museum, which is the epitome of masculine structures, and in the back: a goddess! You could say this is what I’ve worked for my whole life!”