

FUELING THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

Judy Chicago to ignite feminist fireworks at Art Basel Miami Beach

By [ALI ORIAKU](#) • November 27, 2018



Smoke Bodies (1972) is just one of Chicago's radical performance works from the sixties called *Atmospheres*, a series of pyrotechnic art installations that took place in Pasadena, California. (Courtesy Judy Chicago)

Known most for her landmark piece, *The Dinner Party* (1979), revolutionary [feminist](#) artist Judy Chicago uses art, painting, and sculpture to showcase the role of women throughout history and culture. Opening on December 4 in conjunction with [Art Basel Miami Beach](#), *Judy Chicago: A Reckoning*, is an exhibition that will feature six major works of art produced by Chicago between the 1960s and 1990s. The exhibit, which will take place at Miami's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), will also unveil *A Purple Poem for Miami*, Chicago's new, site-specific smoke piece that will ignite the museum's sculpture garden with colorful smoke bombs, dry ice, and other pyrotechnics.



The *Atmospheres* pieces, which Chicago displayed in the '60s and '70s were intended to be daring acts of feminism. (Courtesy Judy Chicago)

A Purple Poem draws from Chicago's radical performance works from the sixties called *Atmospheres*, a series of pyrotechnic art installations that took place in [Pasadena](#), California.

The *Atmospheres* pieces, which Chicago displayed in the '60s and '70s and then recently again in 2012, were intended to be daring acts of [feminism](#). At the time of their conception, Chicago often joked that she would set the Pasadena Art Museum on fire in protest of its male-dominated curatorial preferences. While the art museum was never set ablaze, Chicago inflamed the deserts, fields, and forests of Pasadena with fireworks, smoke bombs, and other colorful explosives she had learned to use. Each eccentric and vivacious display of pyrotechnics created a mesmerizing visual effect, conjuring feelings of wonder, fear, and inspiration among its viewers.



Chicago inflamed the deserts, fields, and forests of Pasadena with fireworks, smoke bombs, and other colorful explosives she had learned how to use. (Courtesy Judy Chicago)

“The narrative of landscape and land art had been dominated by men,” [said](#) Chicago in an interview with *New York Magazine*. “*Atmospheres* came from the desire to insert a feminine perspective into the conversation and to soften and feminize the environment.”

Her words are especially significant in light of the fact that she was sexually harassed by the head of the fireworks company where she once apprenticed at, causing her to take a two-decade hiatus from her project. However, in 2012, with funding and support from the Getty Performance Festival, Chicago was able to revisit her role as a pioneering female pyrotechnician.



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Atmospheres, along with the upcoming exhibition at ICA Miami, represent the ways in which Chicago’s powerful feminist voice not only transforms the landscape and environment but also interpretations of modernism and its values.

Photographs documenting *Atmospheres* are currently on display at Nina Johnson Gallery in [Miami](#). A *Purple Poem for Miami*, her sixth major art installation, will take place at ICA Miami in February 2019.