

frieze

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What do you like the look of?



The sky in New Mexico, which is why we live there.



Judy Chicago

What images keep you company in the space where you work?

For the last decade, I have been working on glass, which requires intense focus and concentration, so I have to have no visual distractions in my studio.

What was the first piece of art that really mattered to you?

When I was a child, my parents – who were political activists – had two Diego Rivera reproductions hanging in the dining room. I can still remember their rounded forms and celebration of working people. From time to time, art writers have likened my work to his, though I don't think the comparison is apt. If there is any relationship, it probably derives from that early influence. By the time I was five, I was visiting the Art Institute of Chicago every week to take art classes. Afterwards, I would wander the galleries where I spent a lot of time with Claude Monet's 'Haystacks' (1890–91) along with Georges Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884–86), staring at his system of complimentary colours. *If you could live with only one piece of art, what would it be?*

The *ketubah* or wedding certificate I made 30 years ago with my

husband, the photographer Donald Woodman.

What is your favourite title of an artwork?

Driving the World to Destruction (1985), one of the monumental paintings from 'PowerPlay', the series I created in the 1980s about the gender construct of masculinity. Sadly, that title describes the world we live in, one in which all the other creatures on the planet will be happy if the human race disappears.

What do you wish you knew?

I wish I knew how to get people to accept what a mess we have made of the planet and to commit themselves to cleaning it up. I also wish I could make collectors understand that the worth of art is in the nature of the work and not in its market value because real art – which is becoming increasingly rare – is priceless.

What should change?

Patriarchy, a global system of dominance that should be dismantled in favour of a more equitable system for the planet: one in which there is justice and equity for all creatures, human and non-human alike. That patriarchal construct is reflected in the art world because art provides a symbolic 'picture' of the world.

What should stay the same?

The human capacity for compassion, generosity of spirit and change.

What could you imagine doing if you didn't do what you do?

I cannot imagine any other life than the one I've lived, one in which I've tried to make a contribution to art history, to increase opportunities for women, to pursue my own vision and to live as ethically as possible. I always wanted to be an artist and I am fortunate that I've been able to live the life I wanted to, which is not true for too many women on this planet.

What music are you listening to?

I spend many hours a day in my studio. As I said, working on glass requires intense concentration so I work in complete silence unless I'm drawing. Then, I tend to listen to Leonard Cohen, whose music I have related to since the late 1960s. I also listen to George Frideric Handel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Phil Glass and a contemporary singer/songwriter named Mary Gauthier.

What are you reading?

Because I do so much research for the work I undertake, when I'm not working I tend to read female detective fiction writers

like Elizabeth George or Jacqueline Winspear, whose 'Maisie Dobbs' series I adore. When I was young, in addition to reading widely in classic literature and philosophy, I read all the male detective writers. Now, I confine myself to books with female protagonists.

Judy Chicago is an American artist, writer and educator. Her work is included in 'The World Goes Pop' at Tate Modern, London, UK until 24 January. In 2015, she had a solo exhibition at Riflemaker, London. Her retrospective, 'Why Not Judy Chicago?', is on view at Azkuna Zentroa, Bilbao, Spain, until 10 January, before travelling to CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, France, from 17 February to 5 June.

Donald Woodman
New Mexico Sky, 2014,
photograph

Courtesy
the artist