

## Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light (1985-93)

Judy Chicago first became interested in the subject of the Holocaust in 1984. Perhaps it was a combination of her inquiry into some of the consequences of male power; her long-standing interest in issues of power and powerless; along with a growing interest in the ways in which being Jewish had shaped both her art and her life that drew her towards this dark subject. Whatever the explanation, her subsequent marriage to photographer Donald Woodman and their joint realization that they were utterly ignorant about both their Jewish heritage and the subject of the Holocaust plunged the couple into an eight year attempt to understand the evil and cruelty that seem to live so closely under the surface of civilizations – both past and present. The Holocaust Project traveled for ten years to both Jewish and non-Jewish institutions and selections from the project continue to be exhibited.

As Chicago wrote in the book that described the traveling exhibition:

“The ***Holocaust Project*** is...structured as a journey into the darkness of the Holocaust and out into the light of hope. It is based on the journey - intellectual, physical, and emotional - that Donald and I took...The exhibition and the book are structured around our belief that...confronting and trying to understand the Holocaust, as painful as that might be, can lead to a greatly expanded understanding of the world in which we live. Our hope is that this will contribute to a firm individual and collective commitment to take up the vast project of transforming ourselves and nurturing our humanity, thereby creating a more peaceful, equitable world.”

## Judy Chicago

Judy Chicago is an artist, author, feminist, educator, and intellectual whose career now spans five decades. Her influence both within and beyond the art community is attested to by her inclusion in hundreds of publications throughout the world. Her art has been frequently exhibited in the United States as well as in Canada, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. In addition, a number of the books she has authored have been published in foreign editions, bringing her art and philosophy to thousands of readers worldwide.

In the early seventies after a decade of professional art practice, Chicago pioneered Feminist Art and art education through a unique program for women at California State University, Fresno, a pedagogical approach that she has continued to develop over the years. In 1974, Chicago turned her attention to the subject of women's history to create her most well-known work, ***The Dinner Party***, which was executed between 1974 and 1979 with the participation of hundreds of volunteers. This monumental multimedia project, a symbolic history of women in Western Civilization, has been seen by more than one million viewers during its sixteen exhibitions held at venues spanning six countries. In 2007, ***The Dinner Party*** was permanently housed at the Brooklyn Museum as the centerpiece of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, thereby achieving Chicago's long-held goal. In conjunction with the permanent housing, Chicago published a final updated book about ***The Dinner Party: From Creation to Preservation*** (Merrell, 2007).

From 1980 to 1985, Chicago worked on the ***Birth Project***. Having observed an absence of iconography about the subject of birth in Western art, Chicago designed a series of birth and creation images for needlework, which were executed under her supervision by 150 skilled needleworkers around the country. The ***Birth Project*** was exhibited in more than 100 venues and can be seen in numerous public collections around the country including the Albuquerque Museum where the core collection of the ***Birth Project*** has been placed to be made available for exhibition and study.

Chicago's next series was ***PowerPlay***; drawings, paintings, weavings, cast paper, and bronze reliefs in which Chicago brought a critical feminist gaze to the gender construct of masculinity, exploring how prevailing definitions of power have affected the world in general - and men in particular. The thought processes involved in ***PowerPlay***, the artist's long concern with issues of power and powerlessness and a growing interest in her Jewish heritage led Chicago to her next body of art. The ***Holocaust Project: From Darkness Into Light*** (which was created in collaboration with her husband, photographer Donald Woodman) involved eight years of inquiry, travel, study, and artistic creation. The traveling exhibition is comprised of a series of images merging Chicago's painting with the innovative photography of Donald Woodman, as well as works in stained glass and tapestry designed by Chicago and executed by skilled artisans.

***Resolutions: A Stitch in Time*** was Judy Chicago's last collaborative project. Begun in 1994 with needle workers with whom she had worked for many years, ***Resolutions*** combines painting and needlework in a series of exquisitely crafted and inspiring images which reinterpret

traditional adages and proverbs. The exhibition opened in June 2000 at the Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY, and was toured to seven venues around the United States and Canada.

Chicago is the recipient of numerous awards and grants. Her archives are housed at the Schlesinger Library for the History of Women in America at Radcliffe/Harvard. In 2011, Penn State University established the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection to enable students and scholars to study her unique pedagogical methods. Chicago is also the author of numerous books: *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*, 1975 (subsequently published in England, Germany, Japan, Taiwan, and China); ***The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage***, 1979; *Embroidering Our Heritage: **The Dinner Party** Needlework*, 1980 (also published in a combined edition in Germany); the ***Birth Project***, 1985 (Anchor/Doubleday); ***Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light***, 1993; ***The Dinner Party, Judy Chicago***, 1996; (Viking Penguin); *Beyond the Flower: The Autobiography of a Feminist Artist*, 1996 (Viking Penguin); *Fragments from the Delta of Venus*, 2004 (powerHouse Books) and *Kitty City: A Feline Book of Hours*, 2005 (Harper Design International). She published a final book on ***The Dinner Party: From Creation to Preservation***, 2007 (Merrell Publishers) in conjunction with its permanent housing. In 2014, Monacelli will publish Chicago's new book, *Institutional Time: A Critique of University Studio Art Education*.

For over five decades, Judy Chicago has remained steadfast in her commitment to the power of art as a vehicle for intellectual transformation and social change and to women's right to engage in the highest level of art production. As a result, she has become a symbol for people everywhere, known and respected as an artist, writer, educator, feminist and humanist whose work and life are models for an enlarged definition of art, an expanded role for the artist, and women's right to freedom of expression.

## Donald Woodman

Donald Woodman's photographic career spans over four decades. He holds an undergraduate degree in architecture and an MFA in photography. He has studied with or been an assistant to: Ezra Stoller (1915 - 2004), recognized as the leading American architectural photographer of the twentieth century, whose brilliant photographs helped establish the modern movement in architecture; Minor White (1908 - 1976), renowned photographer, teacher, critic, editor and curator, whose efforts to extend photography's range of expression made him one of the most influential creative photographers of the mid-twentieth century; Agnes Martin (1912 - 2004), noted minimalist/abstract expressionist painter of the twentieth century; Dan Margulis, specialist in the field of applied color theory and one of the first three members inducted into Adobe Photoshop Hall of Fame.

Woodman's career includes extensive work as a commercial photographer; in the scientific research environment and in the fine art photography sphere as he seamlessly moves between the world of commercial photography and fine art photography. His work has been exhibited, collected and published both nationally and internationally in magazines and books. With his depth of understanding in traditional photographic techniques along with his strong grounding and knowledge of the use of Photoshop and other digital techniques in the manipulation of photographic images, he feels equally comfortable combining both in creating images which has influenced and broadened the scope of his own creative work.

His oeuvre includes the ***Holocaust Project: From Darkness Into Light*** with Judy Chicago; ***The Rodeo and the West; The Therapist; Gay Rodeo; Harbingers of which Future; The Selling of the West; Attractions...Addictions...and other Kodak Moments***. In addition, since completing the ***Holocaust Project*** in 1993, he and Judy Chicago have collaborated together on a variety of art projects.