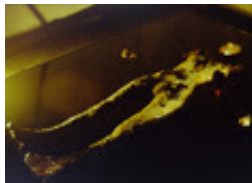


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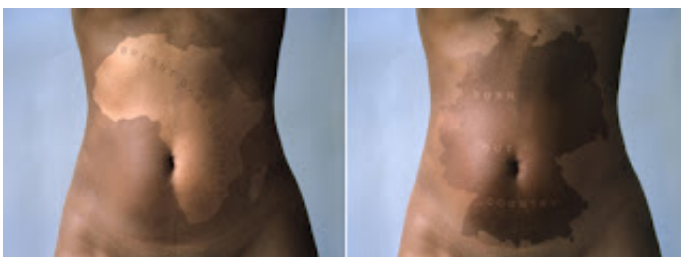
Brooklyn Museum - Elizabeth A. Sackler center for Feminist Art

- April 08, 2007



I visited the [Brooklyn Museum's](#) center for Feminist art, the exhibit was Global Feminisms. Brooklyn Museum of Art unveiled this weekend an 8,300 square foot space dedicated to feminist art. [New](#)

[York Newsday](#) describes it here.



An 8,300-square-foot space specifically dedicated to examining the impact of feminism in the art world, the

first museum space of its kind, is taking up residence at the Brooklyn Museum. The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art opens to the public Friday with a full schedule of talks and performances for the opening weekend.

This is a huge, important global event," feminist icon Gloria Steinem said at a



Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1974-1979
Installation view

Image copyright The Brooklyn Museum

media preview on Thursday. "This center is going to change many lives."

The center is the brainchild of Sackler, who originally had thought about creating a freestanding museum for feminist art before approaching the Brooklyn Museum to host the space.

When "I think of feminist values, I think of equality, equity, justice," Sackler told The Associated Press a few days before the opening. "I see those values in feminism; those are part of what feminist artis.

Here is a brief [history](#) and background of this art.

Feminists point out that throughout most of recorded history males have imposed patriarchal (father-centered) social systems (in which they have dominated females). Although it is not the goal of this article to recount the development of feminist theory in full, the history of feminist art cannot be understood apart from it. Feminist theory must take into account the circumstances of most women's lives as mothers, household workers, and caregivers, in addition to the pervasive misconception that women are genetically inferior to men. Feminist art notes that significant in the dominant (meaning especially Western) culture's patriarchal heritage is the preponderance of art made by males, and for male audiences, sometimes transgressing against females. Men have maintained a studio system which has excluded women from training as artists, a gallery system that has kept them from exhibiting and selling their work, as well as from being collected by museums albeit somewhat less in recent years than before.

The center piece of the show is Judy Chicago's installation "dinner party", which portrays a last supper for women that made a difference throughout European and American history. The plates had vaginal patterns, and each tablecloth/runner represented the particular historical period that the women were born in. The first woman was the primordial goddess and the last one was Georgia o'keefe.

[Tufts Daily](#) describes Judy Chicago's installation here.

The iconic early feminist piece by Judy Chicago, "Dinner Party" (1979), has been given a permanent home in the space. This large-scale work is meant to portray a Last Supper for famous women throughout history. The triangular dinner table is set with ceramic plates shaped into a diverse array of vaginal forms for thirty-nine famous women whose names are intricately woven into their tablecloth settings. Hundreds of additional women are represented on tiles of the floor of the space.

The Brooklyn Museum was the first place to display the work in 1980, when the piece was still new. Now, it is established with a room designed for it surrounded by a triangular glass structure that slants inward in a darkened room so as to preserve it. An adjoining gallery was created to allow the work to adhere to its didactic function by featuring biographical information about the women represented at dinner.

While the message can be seen as outdated to many contemporary viewers, the work can be appreciated for its historical value, its momentous presence and its intricate details.

The Global Feminisms exhibit was divided thematically along the lines of life cycles, identities, politics and emotions. Fifty countries were represented, the exhibits were mostly video and photographs. At the life cycles section, there was a wonderful image of a Japanese grandma with pink hair, riding on a motorcycle with a much younger partner, with a sense of joy and freedom. It was from the Yuka Series by [Miwa Yanagi](#), My grandmother. There was a photograph next to Yanagi's piece of a naked older woman looking up at the sky and clouds, with a sense of calm and peace.

There was poignant humor to the piece by British artist Sarah Lucas, titled "The Sperm Thing," of a soccer ball, steel bucket, and pantyhose. It was so basic, simple and understated.

Another very powerful piece, Thanatometamorphosis, by [Iskra Dimitrova](#) was of death or the state of Bardo, that was recreated with the dark void stillness, pungent smell of death, accompanied by a low hum, as the human body decomposed back into water.

The South Asian contingent was represented by Dayanita Singh's photograph of the Hijra Mona and her daughter Ayesha, Shazia Sikander's drawing and Ambreen Butt's minatures were shown. But the video installation of Sonia Khurana, influenced by Trinh

Min Ha's politics and filmmaking was impressive. She juxtaposed her own sense of dislocation by describing her grandmother's sense of loss and displacement after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Mequita Ahuja's painting Boogie Woogie was interesting. She is Asian Indian and African American.

The exhibit was powerful, uncomfortable, gross, empowering, challenging, humourous and one left feeling pain at the power that these images attempted to create. From suicide, to cutting to reproduction by much older woman, to milk dropping from a woman's breast, to rape and death and much more. The Feminist center is a wonderful addition to the cultural landscape of New York, and the fact that it began with a global focus is wonderful.

[The New Yorker](#) has a critical review of it here.

Genius and vileness can cohabit an artist's soul as comfortably as mediocrity and rectitude. The Sackler Center faces incommensurable choices: to advance what women corporately want or to promote what a gifted élite of women does. It will opt both ways, probably, with attendant anguished debate.



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