



**TITLE:** *Birth Project:*

*The Crowning Q 5*

**ARTIST:** Judy Chicago

**DATE:** 1982

**SIZE:** 56 1/2" x 89"

**MEDIUM:** reverse appliqué and quilting over drawing on fabric

**ACCESSION #:** 97.4

Additional works in the collection by the artist?

Yes  No

### ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"Women's deeds and work need to be a part of permanent history." Judy Chicago

### ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Judy Chicago is well known for the convention-shattering nature of her work in such monumental, collaborative projects as *The Dinner Party*, *Birth Project*, *Holocaust Project* and *Resolutions: A Stitch in Time*. As an artist, author, feminist, educator and intellectual whose career now spans more than four decades, she has been a leader and model for an artist's right to express freely his or her core identity, for a definition of fine art that encompasses craft techniques, and for the necessity of an art that seeks to effect social change. Chicago has explored an unusually wide range of media over the course of her career: painting, drawing, printmaking, china-painting, ceramics, tapestry, needlework, and most recently glass. Her fluency with diverse media, her commitment to creating content-based art in the service of social change and her interest in collaboration have led to her being included in the art historical canon—most recently in Janson's *Basic History of Western Art*.

### CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

For Chicago, *The Birth Project* reveals "a primordial female self hidden among the recesses of my soul.... The birthing woman, as in *The Crowning*, is a part of the dawn of creation." Chicago states, "Traditionally, men make art and women have babies," so "the *Birth Project* is an act of solidarity, both with those women who had to choose, and with those who refused to choose."

### MEDIA DESCRIPTION

The media used in the *Birth Project* as a whole include fabrics of cotton and silk, needlepoint yarns, threads, and the associated mesh canvases, paint, quilted panels, appliqué, and various other materials usually thought of as women's craft materials, not the materials of "high" art. Many fabric, sewing, needlepoint, and embroidery techniques were used by the women participating in this collaborative project. Each woman brought her personal skill set and techniques to the piece on which she worked, thus helping to birth a cohesive textile. In total the *Birth Project* includes 84 exhibition units.

### RELATED TERMINOLOGY

**Canon:** The body of accepted artists and works.

**High Art:** Art focusing on aesthetics and concept. Traditionally primarily sculpture and painting created the category of high art though today the boundaries between high and low art, and art and craft, have become blurred.

**Craft:** Technical skill, considered apart from the fine arts, performed by artisans or craftspeople with the focus on function, technique, materials, and skill itself.

### REFERENCES

Thompson, Viki D. and Lucy R. Lippard. 1999. *Judy Chicago: Trials and Tributes*. Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts, School of Visual Arts & Dance.

Chicago, Judy. 1985. *The Birth Project*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.



*Birth Project: Creation of the World.* Judy Chicago, 1984. Needlepoint over painting on 18 mesh canvas. 19 3/4" x 38".

### ***My Own Creation Myth***

#### **ACTIVITY LESSON PLAN: Grades 9—12**

The following activity concepts could be extended from a few sessions to an entire unit. Each activity can be done separately or combined.

#### **Objectives:**

1. In teams student will explore, compare and contrast two works by Judy Chicago with special emphasis on the place and role of women, symbolism, and myth in those works.
2. Each student will visually develop his or her own creation myth to include empowering images of both females and males.

**Activity:** Students will be introduced to the book, the *Birth Project*, published to augment the work of the Chicago series titled by the same name, the *Birth Project*. Working in small groups, students will explore Chicago's quilt, *The Crowning Q5*, as well as Chicago's needlework piece, titled *Creation of the World*. In a comparison and contrast of the materials, techniques, and content of the two, they will determine the symbolism and mythology that emerges from each. They will determine the story each tells. They will discuss Chicago's emphasis on women in the works and the reasons for that emphasis. Chicago wished to return empowering women's stories to history and myth in western culture. Eventually students will mention the idea of beginnings or origins.

Direct students to talk about their own origins, that of their families, where they are from, and their relationships to the earth in general. Ask students to talk about the accomplishments of women in the stories of their families. Mention that Chicago seems to incorporate an artistic interpretation of sciences like astronomy or evolution. Ask students to describe her visual method for doing so. Based on looking at Judy Chicago's work, students will determine "my own creation myth." Students will collect images via the internet, magazines, newspapers, and other sources to assemble a coherent form that represents that myth. Students will include respectful and empowering roles and images for both females and males in their myths.

#### **SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS: 9—12**

Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

### ***Myths of Beginnings—the Beginnings of Myths***

#### **ART HISTORY LESSON PLAN: Grades 9—12**

Judy Chicago conceived modern creation myths within the context of her multimedia work, the *Birth Project* specifically, and in general through much of her other work. By reaching back into history, Chicago transplanted the myth from a distant past to a dynamic present.

**Activity:** Students will be introduced to *The Crowning Q5* quilt and *Creation of the World*. Through research, discussion, and writing, students will understand these Chicago images, and others, as 1) contemporary versions of myth and 2) myth that restores women to a place of honor.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Students will research and then discuss as a class the concept of myth, determining its definition. They will apply that definition to these images.
2. Students will find myths from other cultures, for example myths from the following: ancient Greece, Polynesia, the Inuit. Require students to research the Pandora Myth from ancient Greece so they can make a comparison and contrast of the place of women in the Greek myth and the place of women in the myth of the Chicago imagery. Students will discuss these myths in class as well as the comparisons and contrasts.
3. Students will research Judy Chicago's imagery and find at least two other images by Chicago that deal with women and myth.
4. Students will write an essay about one of the Judy Chicago images selected to include:
  - a. an explanation of the story or myth it tells
  - b. an explanation of the reasons the Chicago artwork can be classified as myth
  - c. a comparison/contrast of the myth in the Chicago image with a myth from another culture
  - d. an explanation of the artist's honored depiction of women, or woman, in the work.



Recreation of *Creation of Pandora*. Original: The Tarquinia Painter, c. 470BC-460BC. Pottery. 5" tall. British Museum.