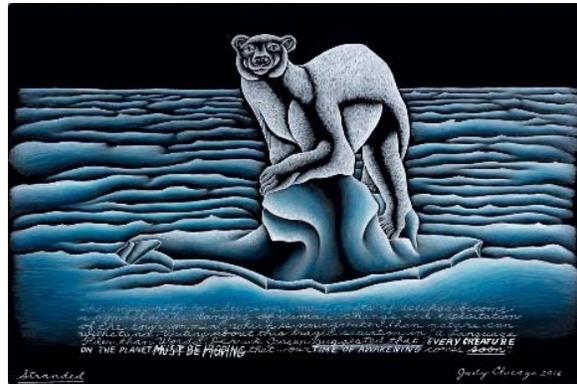


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**Judy Chicago's new series explores mortality and environmental destruction in *The End: A Meditation on Death and Extinction*
National Museum of Women in the Arts | Sept 19, 2019–Jan. 20, 2020**

WASHINGTON—The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) presents *Judy Chicago—The End: A Meditation on Death and Extinction*, on view Sept. 19, 2019–Jan. 20, 2020. Visually striking and emotionally charged, the newest body of work by feminist icon Judy Chicago continues her commitment to challenging the status quo and advocating for social change. Through a series comprising 30 paintings on black glass, seven painted porcelain works and two large-scale bronze reliefs, the artist reflects on her own mortality and appeals for compassion on behalf of endangered animals and ecosystems. Viscerally bold, the graphic style of these works communicates the intensity of Chicago's personal contemplation of her own death as well as the death of entire species.



While Chicago is best known for *The Dinner Party* (1974), the renowned iconic mixed-media installation that celebrates the legacies of women throughout history, this new exhibition also connects with her many other prescient bodies of work—on sex, birth, death, violence and the natural world. Chicago has built her career on pushing boundaries, and *The End* is no less audacious than her earlier projects.

"In many ways, this series is the culmination of 50 years of studio practice, a practice that has taken me on a journey of discovery through many different topics expressed through a wide range of techniques," said Chicago. "In a world in which women's cultural production continues to be undervalued, discounted or marginalized, I am pleased to premier this work for the first time at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the only museum in the world dedicated to ensuring that women's art is preserved."

"Judy Chicago is a formative figure in contemporary art. She has spent her career exploring social issues, expressing a unique vision that incorporates personal experience with a concern for the wider world," said NMWA Director Susan Fisher Sterling. "Brave, earnest and vulnerable, Chicago often has provided a voice for those she feels have none. We are excited to present this new body of work that explores the next frontier for her, for us and for others on this planet—mortality."

AGING AND DEATH AS THE FINAL TABOO

Our society has an undeniable discomfort surrounding aging and death. In *The End*, Chicago tackles mortality, both as a universal human experience and as a personal rumination. In a culture that prizes youth and beauty—particularly for women—Chicago's stark images are a potent antidote. She also presents the mortality of entire ecosystems that have been irreparably damaged by the action, or inaction, of humans. With this series, Chicago continues her history of merging the personal and political with attention-grabbing colors, technical mastery and uncomfortable subjects.



In the first part of the series, “Stages of Dying,” executed in china paint on white porcelain, Chicago depicts a nude older woman progressing through the five stages of grief. As defined by pioneering psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, these stages can relate to grieving the death of a loved one as well as the contemplation of one’s own inevitable end. The figure, whose baldness renders it somewhat androgynous, expresses an archetypal “everywoman,” a universal figure to whom death will eventually come. Breaking with the tradition of the nude female form throughout art history—idealized, youthful, supple and objectified by centuries of mostly male artists—Chicago presents an aged body. Her wiry and wrinkled protagonist refutes the trappings of stereotypical femininity.

The second and third parts of the series, “Mortality” and “Extinction,” are made from kiln-fired glass paint on black glass. Chicago expresses anxiety about how she might die in the “Mortality” panels. Here, figures present a vivid vision of the artist’s demise. The works give form to universal contemplation, yet they are also intensely personal for a woman entering her ninth decade. A more collective sense of anxiety and sadness is expressed in the “Extinction” panels, which depict, in often graphic detail, groups of animals and plants that have been irrevocably harmed by humans, from elephants killed for their tusks to trees flayed of their bark. Chicago’s handwritten script—a part of her practice since the early 1970s—appears in each part of the series.

While porcelain and glass panels form the majority of this series, *The End* also includes two large-scale bronze reliefs. The first is a half-length image of Chicago—her head against a pillow, eyes closed and hands emerging from a shroud with a bouquet of lilies. This self-portrait is modeled directly from the artist’s face and recalls the long tradition of death masks. The second, larger bronze is an assemblage of creatures threatened with extinction. The work evokes the visual language of mounted hunting trophies, calling into question the ethics of killing purely for sport. Chicago has previously worked in bronze, however, the works in *The End* are among her largest to date in the medium.

ARTISTIC PRACTICE

Painted porcelain has been part of Chicago’s artistic practice since the 1970s when she and a team of volunteers created *The Dinner Party*. Their use of embroidery and porcelain paid homage to

practices that have historically been considered “women’s work.” Throughout her long career, Chicago has used materials frequently associated with women—including porcelain, embroidery and glass—to challenge the gendered binary of high art versus decorative art.

Glass painting is a time-consuming and laborious process—multiple firings are needed to achieve an artist’s desired effect. These works demonstrate the skill that Chicago has honed over the years, beginning with the *Holocaust Project* (1985–93), a series of works bookended by stained-glass installations. In 2003, through an artist’s residency at the famed Pilchuck Glass School outside of Seattle, she continued to expand her proficiency in the medium.

Judy Chicago—The End: A Meditation on Death and Extinction is organized by the National Museum of Women in the Arts. The exhibition is made possible by the MaryRoss Taylor Exhibition Fund.

ABOUT JUDY CHICAGO

Judy Chicago is an artist, author of 14 books, educator and humanist whose work and life are models for an enlarged definition of art, an expanded role for the artist and women’s rights to freedom of expression. Born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1939, she attended the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of California, Los Angeles. Chicago is best known for her role in creating a feminist art and education program in California during the early 1970s, and for her monumental work *The Dinner Party*, executed between 1974 and 1979, now housed at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art in the Brooklyn Museum. Over the subsequent decades, Chicago has approached a variety of subjects in a range of mediums, including the *Birth Project*, *PowerPlay*, the *Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light*; and *Resolutions: A Stitch in Time*. Chicago’s work has been exhibited widely in the United States and internationally, and her continued influence has, in recent years, been increasingly acknowledged.

PUBLICATION

Published by NMWA and Scala Arts Publishers, *Judy Chicago: New Views* is the first major monograph on the feminist artist in nearly 20 years. Featuring her newest work, *The End*, as well as major examples from throughout her career, this publication offers a new examination of Chicago’s wide-ranging artistic expression and powerful voice. Many people know her famed *The Dinner Party*, but fewer know her other prescient bodies of work—on sex, birth, death, violence, the natural world and more. This fully illustrated, 240-page volume features a lead essay by Sarah Thornton, writer and sociologist of culture, and an interview with Chicago by Hans Ulrich Obrist, artistic director of the Serpentine Galleries, London. Essays on key bodies of Chicago’s work were contributed by noted scholars and curators Chad Alligood, Manuela Ammer, Massimiliano Gioni, Philipp Kaiser, Jonathan D. Katz, Martha C. Nussbaum, William J. Simmons and Susan Fisher Sterling. The book is published on the occasion of the artist’s 80th birthday and the exhibition of *The End* at NMWA, as well as the announcement of the Judy Chicago online archival portal.



JUDY CHICAGO PORTAL

The online [Judy Chicago Portal](#) bridges Chicago's archives housed in three separate institutions: Penn State University (art education), the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America (personal papers) and the Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center at NMWA (visual). Bringing together a public university library, a private institutional library and a museum library allows—in this rare collaboration—for each digital repository to reach new audiences and amplify their collective interests in Chicago's oeuvre and overall impact. NMWA is developing the definitive visual archive to document Chicago's creative life, covering the span of her career. The portal will launch on Oct. 17, 2019.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS

The National Museum of Women in the Arts ([NMWA](#)) is the only major museum in the world solely dedicated to championing women through the arts. With its collections, exhibitions, programs and online content, the museum inspires dynamic exchanges about art and ideas. NMWA advocates for better representation of women artists and serves as a vital center for thought leadership, community engagement and social change. NMWA addresses the gender imbalance in the presentation of art by bringing to light important women artists of the past while promoting great women artists working today. The collections highlight painting, sculpture, photography and video by artists including Louise Bourgeois, Mary Cassatt, Judy Chicago, Frida Kahlo, Shirin Neshat, Faith Ringgold, Pipilotti Rist, Amy Sherald and Élisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun.

NMWA is located at 1250 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. It is open Mon.–Sat., 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sun., noon–5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for visitors 65 and over and students, and free for NMWA members and youths 18 and under. Admission is free the first Sunday of each month. For information, call 202-783-5000, visit [nmwa.org](#), [Broad Strokes Blog](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#).

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IMAGES

Judy Chicago, *Stranded*, from *The End: A Meditation on Death and Extinction*, 2016; Kiln-fired glass paint on black glass, 12 x 18 in.; Courtesy of the artist; Salon 94, New York; and Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco; © Judy Chicago/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Photo © Donald Woodman/ARS, NY

Judy Chicago, *Stages of Dying 5/6: Depression*, from *The End: A Meditation on Death and Extinction*, 2015; China paint on porcelain, 12 x 16 in.; Courtesy of the artist; Salon 94, New York; and Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco; © Judy Chicago/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Photo © Donald Woodman/ARS, NY