



Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist

Judy Chicago , Anaïs Nin (Illustrator)

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"Through the Flower" was my first book (I've since published nine others). I was inspired to write it by the writer and diarist, Anais Nin, who was a mentor to me in the early seventies. My hope was that it would aid young women artists in their development and that reading about my struggles might help them avoid some of the pitfalls that were so painful to me. I also hoped to spare them the anguish of 'reinventing the wheel," which my studies in women's history had taught me was done again and again by women, specifically because we have not had access to our foremothers' experience and achievements-one consequence of the fact that we still learn both history and art history from a male-centered bias with insufficient inclusion of women's achievements. I must admit that when I re-read "Through the Flower," I winced at some of the unabashed honesty; at the same time, I am glad that my youthful self had the courage to speak so directly about my life and work. I doubt that I could recapture the candor that allowed this book to reflect such unabashed confidence that the world would accept revelations so lacking in self-consciousness. And yet, it is precisely this lack that helps give the book its flavor, the flavor of the seventies, when so many of us believed that we could change the world for the better, a goal that has been-as one of my friends put it-'mugged by reality." And yet, better an overly idealistic hope that the world could be reshaped for the better than a cynical acceptance of the status quo. At least we tried-and I'm still trying. Perhaps I'm just too old now to change. Judy Chicago 2005

Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist Details

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From Reader Review Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist for online ebook

Erica Chang says

the hard works that these girls did, made it easier for the girls today to do their works. every action, every movement counts.

Ellie says

This is Judy Chicago of The Dinner Party fame. This is a memoir of being a female artist in the 1970s and of the feminist movement.

Although there is still progress to be made (especially in the art world), this memoir is a reminder of where women were in the 70s, despite 200 years of feminism. The memoir is dated but moving. I love reading books by artists, especially women, about how they make their art. And I loved Chicago's detailed accounts of how she struggled to find her place in the world, as an artist, as a woman and as a woman artist. I loved her feeling of responsibility to other women, her perception of herself not just as an individual but also as a social being, someone connected to others both in giving and receiving, and how she worked to find a balance between her personal art and her activism.

The 1970s seem a long time ago but I was there and this book was a powerful reminder of that world. I'm interested in reading the continuation of this book, Beyond the Flower: The Autobiography of a Feminist Artist and how Chicago and her art evolved in later years.

Elizabeth says

A first hand account of the atmosphere of the women's movement and feminist art is great to find, however its a bit hard for me to get Judy's explanations of the events in her life through the "the flower." Her retrospective view on past experiences is so authoritative, yet not very similar to how I understand my life and work.

HeavyReader says

This is Judy Chicago's autobiography as a feminist and an artist. Very interesting, especially for other artists who are women.

Stephanie says

Through the Flower jumped off the shelf into my hands while on retreat at Harbin Hot Springs. I had just finished Alice Walker's "Possessing the Secret of Joy" in one day and was searching for more voices of

women on the verge.

Judy Chicago's name was familiar and I had seen a showing of her work while living in the city in the 90's so I went into her first memoir with some background knowledge. Cracking it open and finding Anais Nin's introduction was a sweet surprise to the trip into Ms. Chicago's development as a woman-artist.

I particularly appreciated the exploratory tone she expressed herself in and I guess overall it helped me to question my own process' as an artist. I would strongly recommend this book to any artist both male and female for it's history and trans-formative model of growth.

Danaayotte says

I appreciated learning about Chicago's personal/political struggles as a woman artist but mostly I liked reading about her ideas about process and form and how her body of work developed. I was also in awe of her initiative to create programs for women in art.

Jennifer says

A woman's struggle to enter the male-dominated world of art. This fascinating memoir showed the artist's path from her beginnings at the Art Institute of Chicago to her worldwide fame and success as an artist.

Pia says

This the first of Chicago's two memoirs; it's an inspiring recollection of her evolution as a woman artist.

rebeca says

i didn't really understand 1960s feminism until i read this book. judy chicago paints a picture of why it was important to express yourself as a woman and how women created a voice for themselves in the art world. awesome!

Emily Rapport says

Some things here are directly related to the time period in which it was written but much more of Judy Chicago's story is current, thought-provoking and will make you want to learn more.

Grouchymax says

This is the feminism I was raised with via Ms magazine: white, educated, indignant, and while I cringe at the lack of perspective vis a vis other women, this book was still very good for me. I had considerably more spine in the few weeks since I finished this book. The later part describing Womanhouse and the difficulty in pulling women towards sincere, intellectual relationships is particularly dis/heartening; I can't tell you how often I wish a female friend were dying to talk to me about how she's going to test her hypotheses, or her take on Popper, or the upcoming mid-term elections... anything but who she is/was/will be dating. (Ok ok, I mean in addition to. yech.)

Lollo says

This book was published in 1977 but it is still relevant today. It has been a pleasure reading about Judy's analysis of her development and continuation as an artist through the 60's and 70's. The challenges that she faced and still faces are those that many of us born as women may commiserate with. At this point 2nd wave feminism has been so severely criticized for all the things that it wasn't, I am finding it inspiring to remember what it was, in the beginning for those who blazed some overgrown trails.

Jessica says

Judy Chicago is one a famous artist you've probably never heard of, whose artist awakening and feminist awakening ran parallel during the 1960s and 1970s, as she broke through the glass gallery door.

Her autobiography probably wouldn't be palatable to people who aren't comfortable with that feminist concept "the personal is political." Like most autobiographies, Chicago writes about quasi-mundance childhood and adolescence, yet hers are examined with an explicit feminist lens. i.e. "I didn't do XYZ because I was told I couldn't because I was a girl/woman," etc.

Chicago is about the same age as my mother, a little older, and even though they seem as different as two women can be, reading a feminist analysis of what it was like to grow up female in that time period. My generation doesn't understand what bullshit past generations of women had to go through. Even though I'm a writer, not an artist, I wonder if I'd be as strong as she is, if I'd have the conviction, determination and righteous indignance.

I never saw her feminist art installation, The Dinner Party, when it came through New York City while I was in college. And now I regret it! I sincerely hope there is a chance for me to see Judy Chicago's works live.

Hol says

I found a yellowed copy of this at a school book sale and was glad I did, because it is a wonderful time capsule (published 1975, pre-Dinner Party). I loved the parts when Judy Chicago and her students all but ransacked university libraries seeking evidence of women's contributions to art and social history; they were so energized and determined. She seemed, however, to look at any kind of art and see only content,

specifically the content she wished to see, e.g., O'Keeffe's paintings and Eliot's novels are about the oppression of "female role." Uh, okay. Appendices include transcripts of her students' feminist plays, and while I know they don't translate to the page at all, they are intriguingly wild.

Annaj says

The first feminist book I ever read, it left an impression on my life that I carry around with me all the time. "I tried to close my eyes to the fact that contempt for women is really a reflection of a distortion in the entire value system that emphasizes competition, exploitation, and the objectification of human beings, both men as well as women. But once I faced it I had to take responsibility to try to change it." -Judy Chicago
