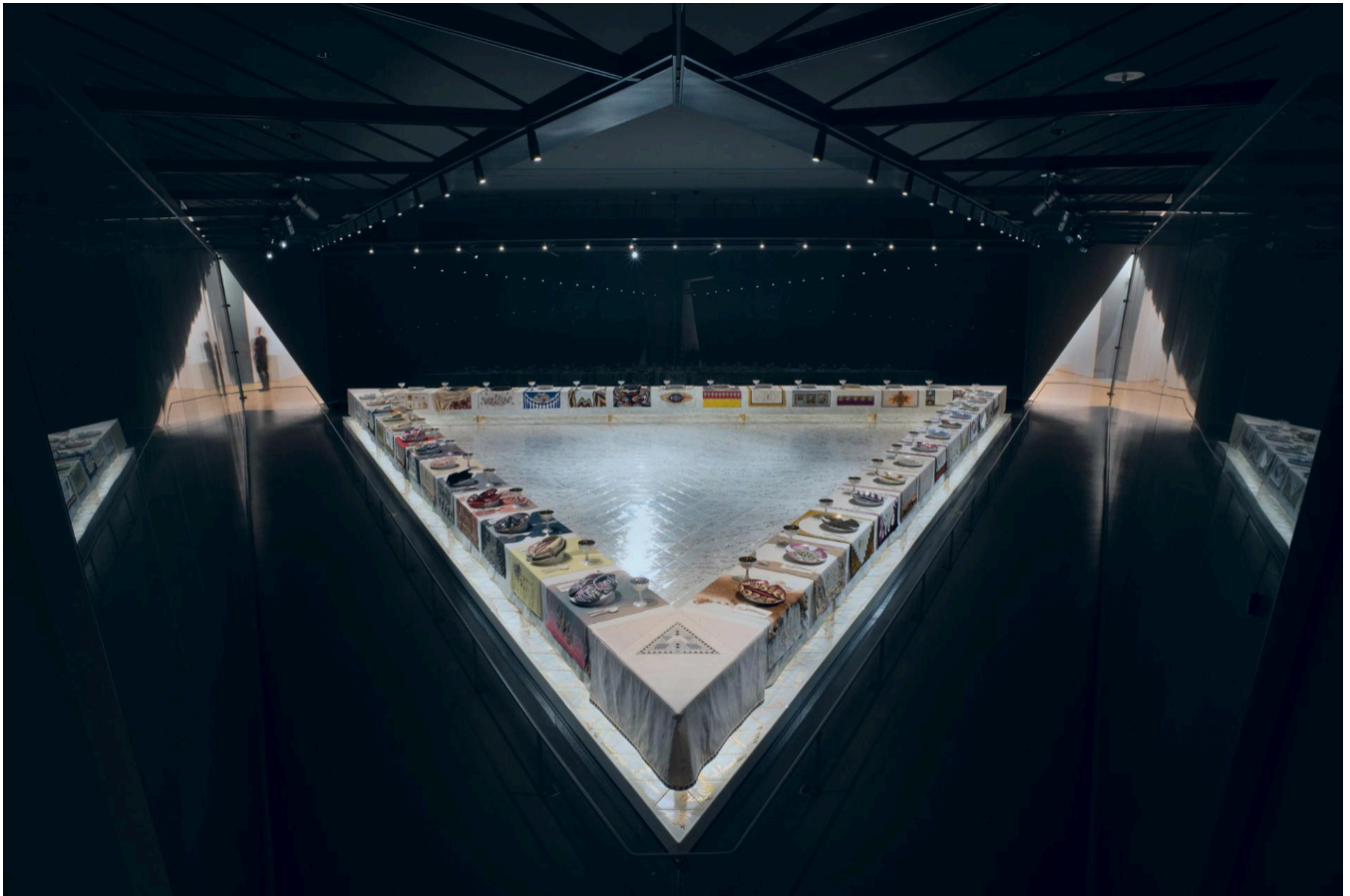


Stories

## A Feminist's Guide to the Brooklyn Museum



Explore the Museum through a feminist lens.

by Elizabeth Treptow

March 8, 2025

The Brooklyn Museum has been the official home of Judy Chicago's foundational feminist artwork *The Dinner Party* since 2002. The work was first shown here in 1980; it has been on permanent display in our first-of-its-kind Center for Feminist Art since 2007.

Chicago coined the term “feminist art.” She uses it to define the practice of artists who draw on gendered experiences and histories. A forerunner in identifying this kind of expression in an academic context, Chicago calls *The Dinner Party* a “symbolic history of women in Western civilization.” The guests represented by the 39 place settings around the massive triangular table are women whose accomplishments have been overlooked, from primordial goddesses to Georgia O’Keeffe.

Some say that no trip to the Brooklyn Museum is complete without a stop at *The Dinner Party*. Check out our audio guide for contemporary perspectives on the work while you’re there! After that, visit the 13 artworks below—all by, for, or about women—to continue your feminist visit.



### OY/YO, Contemporary Art

Brooklyn-based artist Deborah Kass focuses on the intersections among identity, pop culture, and art history. She frequently puts her own spin on the signature imagery of 20th-century male artists: *OY/YO* references Ed Ruscha's word paintings (such as *OOF*), Milton Glaser's *I Love NY* logo, and Robert Indiana's *LOVE* sculptures. "Yo," a familiar greeting, and "oy," an exclamation of frustration, are both baked into Brooklyn's shared vocabulary—and this sunny sculpture—thanks to the influence of local Black, Italian American, and Jewish communities.



### Trailer, Contemporary Art

Liza Lou is best known for works like this one: large-scale scenes completely covered in glass beads. For *Trailer*, inspiration began with film noir—one of Lou's favorite genres—and the stereotypical male character that often drives those stories. As she designed the trailer that he might live in all alone, the work became a representation of a highly gendered space. The detailed beadwork encourages examination of every element in the artwork, but Lou intentionally leaves the narrative open-ended, as if we're seeing only the beginning of a film.



## 2nd Floor



### *Biomorphic Sculpture*, Art of Asia

Katsumata Chieko's *Biomorphic Sculpture* is one of five works in the Arts of Asia galleries that exemplify radical innovations introduced by Japanese women ceramicists. Though ceramic arts have a centuries-long history in Japan, women had long been forbidden at traditional kiln sites. In the 20th century, art colleges and electric kilns provided a way into the medium for many women. Katsumata is known for taking inspiration from sea creatures and vegetables; in this unusual example, her signature, brightly colored glaze is concealed under a layer of crushed porcelain, creating a unique texture.

## 3rd Floor



### Hairdressing Scene, Egyptian, Classical, and Ancient Near Eastern Art

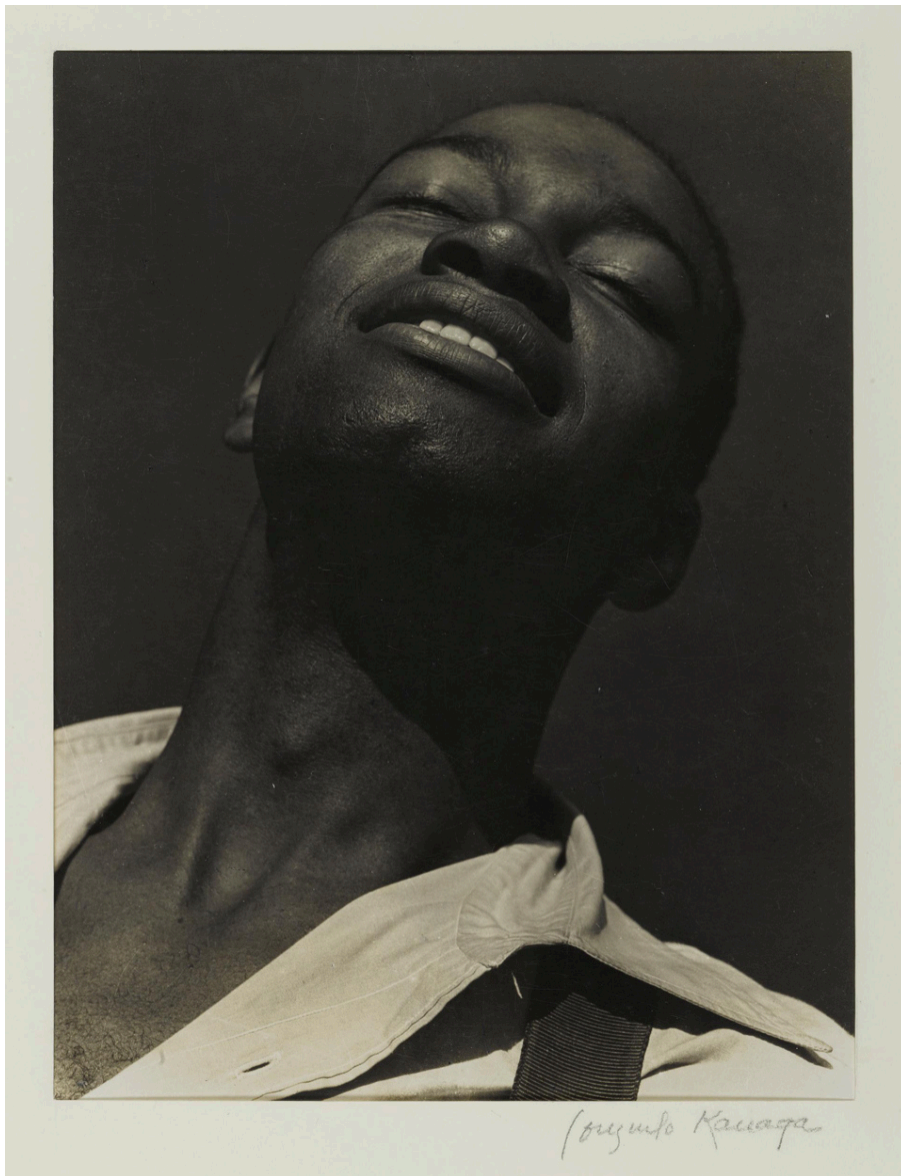
In these reliefs from the tomb of Queen Neferu, we see women at work. This dynamic and intimate image shows the most powerful woman in Egypt in a humanizing personal moment. Her close attendants, hairdressers Inw (left) and Henut (right), are identified by name. This was probably a common scene in the lives of these women, styling the queen's hair in an elaborate fashion for a special occasion. Here, it is possible that Neferu is being styled to perform for the goddess Hathor, who was associated with love, fertility, beauty, music, and the cult of Montuhotep II, the queen's husband.

## 4th Floor



*Youth (Head in Wood)*, American Art

Born in 1890 to Narragansett and Black parents, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet became the first known woman of color to graduate from the Rhode Island School of Design. She was deeply committed to her artistic practice and received critical acclaim in the face of struggles with poverty and isolation. Today, little of Prophet's art survives; portrait heads carved from hardwood, like this one, are her best-known existing works. See them in *Nancy Elizabeth Prophet: I Will Not Bend an Inch*, on view through July 13, 2025.



Kenneth Spencer, Photography

Consuelo Kanaga is recognized today as one of the most important photographers of the 20th century. She started out as a photojournalist—one of few women working in the field at the time. There she began to use her camera to confront urgent social issues, from urban poverty to labor rights to racial terror and inequality. Kanaga celebrated Black creativity while challenging the prevalent notions and representations of Blackness in the United States. This stunning portrait from 1933 depicts Kenneth Spencer, an American singer and actor who became famous in the 1940s. It's on view in *Consuelo Kanaga: Catch the Spirit* through August 3, 2025.





*Untitled (Guanaroca [First Woman])*, Feminist Art

This photograph captures an image that Ana Mendieta sculpted in the caves of Escaleras de Jaruco Park in Cuba. Like all her *Rupestrian Sculptures*—referring to art made on rock—it's named for a Taíno deity. After being forced to flee Cuba as a child, Mendieta, whose practice blended photography with body, earth, and performance art, used art to reconnect to her roots. Like much of her work, *Untitled (Guanaroca [First Woman])* emphasizes feminine histories and Indigenous ways of caring for the earth. See it in *Breaking the Mold: Brooklyn Museum at 200* through February 22, 2026.



*Portrait of Countess Maria Theresia Czernin*, European Art

Included in The Dinner Party's Heritage Floor, Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun was one of the most successful and prolific portrait artists in 18th-century France. She fled the French Revolution, but her prestigious reputation meant there was no shortage of European nobles eager to sit for her. In this portrait's composition, we see many of the artist's signature elements: a copy of *Voyage of Anacharsis*, a red shawl, a relaxed, unpowdered hairstyle, and even a few teeth revealed by a smile. See it in *Breaking the Mold: Brooklyn Museum at 200* through February 22, 2026.





*Brooklyn Bridge*, American Art

Georgia O’Keeffe is one of the most famous American painters of the 20th century. When *The Dinner Party* was completed, she was the only living woman with a place setting at the artwork’s triangular table. Fiercely independent, O’Keeffe was not enthused to be included in the piece: She always wished to be thought of as an artist, full stop, rather than a “woman artist.” The Brooklyn Museum is home to over a dozen O’Keeffe paintings. This unique perspective on a local landmark was the last one she completed in New York before permanently relocating to New Mexico, embarking on a new era of her career. See it in *Breaking the Mold: Brooklyn Museum at 200* through February 22, 2026.

## 5th Floor



### *Kiss Me and You'll Kiss the 'Lasses, American Art*

Lilly Martin Spencer was the breadwinner of her family, a rare feat in the early to mid-19th century. She was well known for her humorous domestic scenes. Here, the artist herself portrays an exuberant and playful housewife, taking pleasure in her task and company. Spencer's paintings were largely for women audiences, who likely saw in them favorable, empowered, and good-natured representations of themselves.





*Degikup Basket*, Arts of the Americas

For millennia, Indigenous women in the Americas have experimented and innovated with using local plants as art-making materials. *Degikup* refers to this style of basket, characterized by tightly coiled, circular forms and decorative motifs crafted from bracken fern root and redbud. Louisa Keyser, a Washoe basketweaver, was widely acclaimed in her lifetime for her pioneering forms, including the *degikup* basket.



*Cradleboard with Attached Toys, Arts of the Americas*

Očhéthi Šakówiŋ women have long created cradleboards like this one before giving birth. The design reflects centuries of visual traditions. Many of the materials are traditional as well, with the exception of brightly colored glass beads acquired through trade with Europeans. These mass-produced, easily accessible beads became a valuable way to sustain creative practices when many Indigenous people were forced into reservations, fundamentally changing their way of life. To this day, artists make cradleboards to envelop their children—and their communities—in warmth, beauty, and protection.



*Early Works #25: Self-Portrait*, Feminist Art

This 1965 painting reflects a political and artistic awakening in Faith Ringgold. She said, “I wanted my painting to express this moment I knew was history. I wanted to give my women’s point of view to this period.” This self-portrait is unique within Ringgold’s series of Civil Rights–era works; many depicted racially charged events. Of this work, she also said, “I was trying to find my voice, talking to myself through my art.”

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