

**Press Conference for the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for
Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, March 22, 2007.**

REMARKS

Elizabeth A. Sackler

It is my distinct honor to address this outpouring of local, national and international press. Your attendance today attests to the historic occasion of the opening of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, to the permanent housing of The Dinner by Judy Chicago, and to the importance of the Center's international inaugural exhibition, "Global Feminisms".

Brooklyn is a community of exciting diversity blessed with an encyclopedic museum whose history and current commitment to education and the arts brings foreign worlds into its great halls. My parents grew up in Brooklyn and often told me, during my childhood, about how in the 1920's it was at the Brooklyn Museum that they learned about ancient cultures and first saw the great art of Europe and from Orient.

Today, I dance the dance of a public historian and art's activist and introduce to you and to the community the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum. The Center does not aim to shock but rather to afford the public the opportunity to study our past, explore our present, and guide us into the future with a space where the essential principals of any civil society, indeed the same principals of feminism – equality, equity, and justice – preside.

The Dinner Party is the heartbeat of the Center in its sheer iconic magnitude, power and brilliance. It is my pleasure, with the gifting and the permanent housing of The Dinner Party to root the Center in women's history, indeed some of the greatest women of history in medicine, theology, philosophy, art, science, music; trail blazing feminists from as far back as the 18th century, and our fearless fighters and leaders for reproductive and civil rights in the 20th.

From there comes the educational branches of the Herstory Gallery (with its first exhibition, "Pharaohs, Queens,

and Goddesses”), a Resource Center and it’s state of the art Web Site, a Presentation Space for the people, for artists and academics, poets and power thinkers, and, of course, the Feminist Art Gallery. The realization of the Feminist Art Gallery’s first exhibition, “Global Feminisms” has been a gargantuan feat – 88 artists from around the world, 49 countries from China to Kenya, Pakistan to Finland, Italy to Indonesia and places in between -- it is an social and political eye-opener; an artistic and intellectual feast. 61 artists are here with us today and for the weekend to discuss their work, and enlighten us about their worlds.

What would it be like to be striped naked to the core and without a mask? That is what artists do. Strip away even their masks to reveal truth. Great artists, in so doing, reveal not only personal truths but also the truth, as they see it, of their experience of the world around them. In many cases work in

“Global Feminisms” show to us worlds filled with gratuitous violence, degradation, and genocide.

The power of art is a power tool, crossing miles, sometimes millennia, sawing at our conscience or bonding and uniting our humanity. Art can be a tool for change. Art is democratic - -often speaking where voices fail, explaining when intellects are frozen, transporting us when our body tells us we are only in the here and now. Art brings us to another place, a new space, an un-thought thought, an understanding of what is so, and... a model of what can be.

As the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art has evolved, as we’ve walked towards this very day – the day of opening, the day of reckoning - it is a good time to take stock and imagine a world where abuse and exploitation of women is replaced by women who take their places at the tables of achievement and power, side by side with men – in academia, in science, in medicine, in journalism, in politics, in the work force and with shared responsibilities for family and home.

Equal rights and equal pay, equal wall space and equal sales prices. Feminism and to that which feminist art speaks is, to me, not the goal but a means to an end.

I am very proud to have envisioned, created in partnership with the Brooklyn Museum, and made possible the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. It is with pride that I give my name and that of my family, the Sackler family, to this endeavor that exemplifies opportunity and education. It is this that I give as a gift to my birthplace, and to my home, New York City.

Thank you.