Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*

“While an undergraduate at UCLA, I took a course titled the Intellectual History of Europe. The professor, a respected historian, promised that at the last class he would discuss women's contributions to Western thought. I waited eagerly all semester, and at the final meeting, the instructor strode in and announced: ‘Women's contributions to European intellectual history? They made none.’”

In response, a collaborative work celebrating female individuality
39 place settings around triangular table, 13 to a side
3 sides: Prehistory to Rome, Early Christianity to Reformation, American Revolution to Women’s Revolution (13 of Last Supper & of witch’s coven)
plate on embroidered runner with name of figure
plate/runner relation varies
sometimes energy of plate breaks out of frame
sometimes runner symbolizes containment of plate
999 names on the porcelain *Heritage Floor*
Chicago had to teach herself china-painting (i.e. not taught in school) later incorporates ceramics, embroidery, textiles Plates, combination of imagery of vulvas & butterflies way of making “active vulval forms” dimensionality, relief also figures into plates “humorously . . . a reinterpretation of the Last Supper from the point of view of those who’ve done the cooking” (*The Dinner Party* 7). although most of the women’s prominence partly a sign of class privilege that is, many of these women not confined to cooking predominantly Western, white women, but not exclusively e.g. Kali, Sacajawea, Sojourner Truth

University of the District of Columbia & Congressional debate result: *The Dinner Party* still has no permanent home are books enough, or is performative presence of piece more than what can be documented?
Is it useful to think of *The Dinner Party* as performance? If so or not, what notion of performance being used?

Before *The Dinner Party*, the piece *Womanhouse* combines an installation with performance elements, such as Leah’s Room and the Cock and Cunt play. Live performance a way, perhaps, of getting beyond art as object art as a fetish, a unique auratic object to be seen once, but once seen, easily named as art separate from life performance perhaps a way of bridging gap between art & life live performance also calls attention to *embodiment* how do ideas actually become physicalized in bodies and how can hiding bodies be a way to hide issues of concern to the people hidden
What about *The Dinner Party*?

a) Performance as highlighting a kind of audience/performer relationship
   very much about constructing a sort of “theatrical” or “architectural”
   relationship to viewer
   monumentality of work, how read in parts?
   audience walking around the piece *performs* the bringing together of the
different elements

b) Is performance “live”?

“*Your work is firmly rooted in history and/or mythology. American drama deals
rarely with the past. What do you conceive as the function of mythology and history
in the contemporary theatre?*  
Müller: The dead are in the overwhelming majority when compared to the living.
And Europe has a wealth of dead stored up on that side of the ledger. The Unites
States, not satisfied with dead Indians, is fighting to close the gap. Literature, as an
instrument of democracy, while not submitting to, should nevertheless be respectful
of, majorities as well as of minorities” *Hamletmachine and other texts*, 139.
performance of dead for audience of living
   characters and stories; again, audience has to perform the unity to some
extent; reading the names, relearning the lost history
C) Performance as “performative”
   action, doing, enacting
   performative: invocation of the muse
   *Iliad*: “Sing, Goddess.”
   word magic, creates a unity where not before

D) Performance/Competence
   Public display of skill, a level of expertise

For next time: Beckett, *Krapp’s Last Tape*
   To what extent, might Benjamin help us to understand the play?
   How does a certain kind of technology affect how story can be told
   and character can be shown?
   If some kind of aura is broken down here, the aura of what?