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NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART ACQUIRES JUDY CHICAGO'S ENTIRE FIREWORKS ARCHIVE FOR ITS CENTER FOR ART + ENVIRONMENT ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS

Titled 'Judy Chicago: Dry Ice, Smoke, and Fireworks,' Chicago's comprehensive fireworks archive includes critical materials from the iconic artist's work with dry ice, colored smoke, and fireworks. The acquisition also includes a set of 12 'Atmospheres' exhibition prints which the Nevada Museum of Art has the right to lend and reproduce.



Reno, Nev. (May 18, 2020)– The Nevada Museum of Art is pleased to announce the recent acquisition of Judy Chicago's comprehensive fireworks archive for its Center for Art + Environment Archive Collections. The archive, *Judy Chicago: Dry Ice, Smoke, and Fireworks*, contains materials from Chicago's extensive body of work with dry ice, colored smoke, and fireworks, manifested in 45 projects spanning from 1967 through the present. These objects include thousands of photographs, digital images, slides, 16 mm films, correspondence, drawings, maps, notes, maquettes, clothing, and press materials. In addition, the acquisition includes a limited edition set of 12 *Atmospheres* exhibition prints that the Nevada Museum of Art has the right to lend and reproduce for exhibitions and publications organized by other institutions. The Museum will debut the archive publicly for the first time with an exhibition, *On Fire: Judy Chicago's Atmospheres Archive*, on view October 16, 2021 through April 17, 2022, at the Nevada Museum of Art in downtown Reno. The exhibition will serve as a major backdrop for the Museum's 2021 Art + Environment Conference focusing on *Land Art: Past, Present, Futures*, scheduled for October 21 - 23, 2021.

Artist, feminist, educator, and intellectual, Chicago has become an omnipresent figure in contemporary culture whose prescient work now spans six decades. Long recognized for her iconic Feminist artworks, recent years have seen a resurgence of interest and appreciation for Chicago's early works (1968 – 1974). Involving a series of increasingly complex, site-specific fireworks pieces she made in the deserts of the American West, these early works were a response to what she considered the male-dominated 60s art scene, and a then-growing emphasis on monumental outdoor Land Art by male artists.

Chicago sought to "feminize" the landscape by deploying fireworks to release colored smoke into the atmosphere. "What I was doing was liberating my color and just letting it loose in the air," Chicago recalls of the tinted hues. "It softened everything. There was a moment when the smoke began to clear, but a haze lingered. And the whole world was feminized—if only for a moment."

Long overlooked by art historians and scholars, Chicago's *Dry Ice*, *Atmospheres*, *Women and Smoke*, and *Smoke Sculptures* provide a critical counterpoint and essential context to the predominantly male Land Artists working in the desert during the 1960s and 70s. Chicago was introduced to the Nevada Museum of Art in 2018, when she was included in the exhibition, *Laid Bare in the Landscape*, that assembled photographs, films, and performance documentation by women artists who, since the 1960s, have situated the nude female body in outdoor landscapes. The exhibition brought renewed focus to Chicago's connections to the genre of Land Art. It is for this reason that the Nevada Museum of Art began working with Chicago in 2018 to secure the acquisition of her fireworks archive for the Center for Art + Environment Archive Collections.

"The Nevada Museum of Art has one of the most significant Land Art archives in the world. For this reason, I could see no better home for my fireworks archive," Chicago said. "The Museum is in the process of subverting and expanding the mainstream definition of Land Art, which historically has been extremely male centered."

The Center for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art is an internationally recognized research center that supports the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their natural, built, and virtual environments. The Center is home to a focused research library with archive collections from more than 1,000 artists and organizations working on all seven continents. As part of the Center's collections, the *Judy Chicago: Dry Ice, Smoke, and Fireworks* archive will join a constellation of major archives related to Land Art. These include project and organizational archives related to Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Walter De Maria, Gianfranco Gorgoni, Michael Heizer, Trevor Paglen, and Ugo Rondinone.

"Judy Chicago's archive builds upon one of the core strengths of the Center, and at the same time opens up a new vista for thinking about and collecting Land Art archives. Women were creating new works with an entirely different and unexpected vocabulary than their male counterparts, and it is one that has not yet been fully recorded in history books," said William L. Fox, Director of the Center for Art + Environment.

Upon acquiring Judy Chicago's fireworks archive, the Nevada Museum of Art will join Penn State University, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, as the stewards of Judy Chicago's archives. The Museum is committed to making the Archive accessible in an online format through their website and digital database, and plans to collaborate with the other three institutions to increase access to Chicago's expansive bodies of work through the "Judy Chicago Research Portal."

To underscore the significance of Chicago's fireworks, the artist's recently-opened Through the Flower Art Space in Belen, New Mexico, is currently offering an online virtual tour of a related exhibition: *On Fire: Judy Chicago Fireworks with Photographs by Donald Woodman*. The exhibition celebrates Chicago's long history of working with pyrotechnics, her ongoing collaboration with husband photographer Donald Woodman on these projects, and her status as a pioneer in the performative medium. When the New Mexico space reopens to the public and programming resumes, William L. Fox, Director of the Nevada Museum of Art, Center for Art + Environment, will deliver a talk in Belen contextualizing Chicago's firework performances within the greater Land Art narrative. A suite of related public programs is also planned at the Nevada Museum of Art in 2021 when the exhibition is on view.

Access high-resolution images and supporting media materials [here](#).

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Nevada Museum of Art is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the statewide institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally recognized research center housing unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents.

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[Image: Judy Chicago, Birthday Bouquet for Belen Smoke Test, 2019. © Judy Chicago/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York Photo © Donald Woodman/ARS, New York. Courtesy of the artist; Salon 94, New York; Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco; and Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles.