

Love Letters

Ode to the people, movements, and a singular object generated in the 1970s that continue to inspire our devotion.

To 1970s musical theater...

I'm a true theater-geek child of the '70s, when musicals were wonderfully weird. Like my beloved *Pippin*, with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, experimental enough to leave a dead king on stage through intermission. Also out there? *Godspell*, Schwartz's folksical about the life of Christ that hit at the same time as Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*—same topic, more electric guitar. Webber made us all want a balcony to sing *Evita*'s "Don't Cry for me Argentina" to unsuspecting folks below. (I once tried this on a NYC fire escape; it didn't end well.) My hippie soul connects to the tune in, drop out love-in *Hair*, which premiered at The Public Theater (long an incubator for innovation; hello *Hamilton* and *Fun Home*) before moving its full-frontal nudity to Broadway. *A Chorus Line*, based on recorded interviews with Broadway chorus members, kicked off at The Public too. Stephen Sondheim, left his indelible mark on the decade with masterpieces like *Follies* and *A Little Night Music*; *Company*, which I listened to—and loved—years before I even saw it; and *Sweeney Todd*, which if you've never heard Broadway doyennes Patti LuPone or Angela Lansbury perform its devilishly-clever "A Little Priest," you're missing out. Crowd pleasers *Grease*, *Chicago*, *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and *Annie* all hit the Great White Way in the '70s. And *The Wiz*, Broadway's first hit musical with an all-black cast spawned the cult classic film with Diana Ross and Michael Jackson. But if I'm playing '70s theater song favorites, I'm partial to the most obscure: "Hard Candy Christmas" from *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, "Let Me Be a Kid" from the gritty musical *Runaways* (started at the Public, it starred a young Diane Lane), and "The Lion Tamer" from *The Magic Show* all still make my heart sing. DANIELLE NUSSBAUM

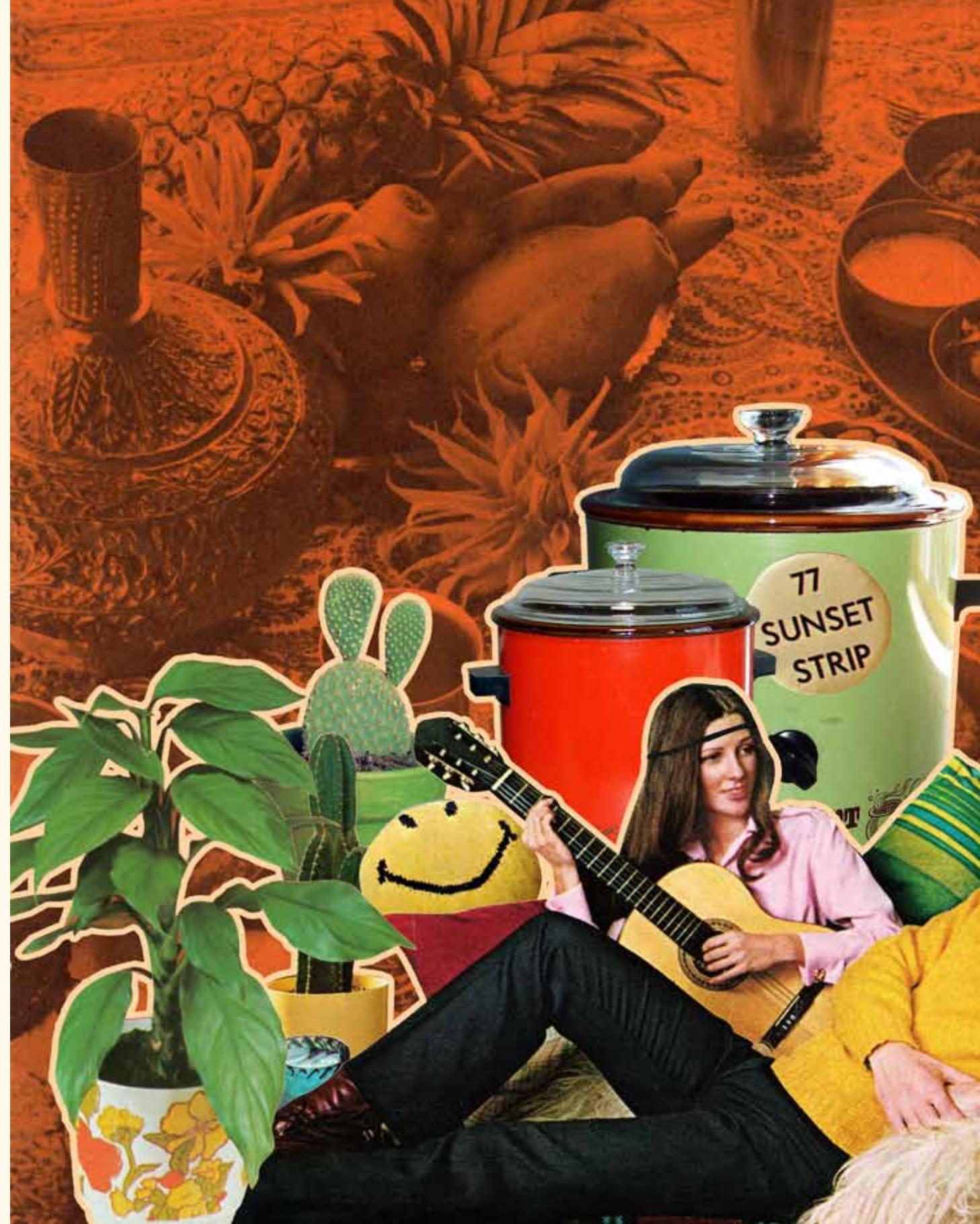
TO JUDY BLUME...

I wrote my first fan letter to Judy Blume in 1991 in my bedroom in Fairfield, CT. I was shy, insecure, and never dreamt of sending it. I kept it folded and tucked into my locked diary, in my vanity drawer, not really needing to put it in the mail. It said something about how she made me see how books, if they're honest and true, can become a part of you, forever. It's a life pact we have, me and Judy. There are images in my mind that could either be memories from my life (*Did* we have uniforms for gym class? *Did* I have a classmate with scoliosis?) or scenes from her books, all meshed and blurred into a part realistic, part fictional adolescence. I felt her words so intensely that it seemed like I must have actually experienced these scenes myself. Her paperbacks made my junior high years better, more exciting, less lonely. A childhood before the Internet, where the question "am I the only one out there who feels like this?" was still a call into the void. Without realizing, I turned fiction into reality, religiously performing my bust-building exercises 35 times a day in the mirror. "I must, I must..." (They didn't work for me either, Margaret.) I practiced kissing on my pillows in the hopes that when the time finally came I would be an expert. Sex, masturbation, moving, periods, training bras, dry skin, talks with God; there was always one of Judy Blume's books for that. How else is a suburban, half-Jewish girl to live? BIANCA TURETSKY

TO THE CROCKPOT (A LOVE EMAIL)...

Babe,
It's been a while, I know.
I didn't expect to be writing
in the middle of the summer,
especially sitting around in
a bikini looking at recipes for
a long weekend of BBQs.
Obviously, chowder and stew
don't come to mind when
we're chillin' by the pool. But,
I have to admit, I've been
thinking of you. Long story
short—I miss you. I try to
ignore you when I reach
around you in the pantry to
find un-frozen Otter Pops or
those little tiki umbrellas, but
I can't. So I'd like to propose
a little rendezvous next
weekend. Everyone says you
should be gathering dust in
the summer months, but screw
what they think—we're just as
lazy now as we are in winter,
so why am I ignoring you?
We could do short ribs
instead of buying more coals
for the barbecue. Break down
some pulled pork for
sandwiches. Or, since what
I love most about you is your
"cooks all day while the cook's
away" mantra, we could put
on a batch of chili before a
trip to the beach and slap it
on quick dogs later that night.
I don't want to have to wait
until winter and split pea
soups and pot roast (just
the thought makes me sweat,
fuck); I want you right now.
How do you feel about
trying to make this happen
year-round? You're worth it
so let's make it work.
xx Alicia ALICIA FORNERET

Illustrations by Beth Hoeckel



SUMMER IN THE BYWATER

The houses in the Bywater are powder brush pink, vivid green, magenta, and turquoise blue. Walking past old men chewing tobacco and spitting at the afternoon sun, I am taken aback by the serenity gifted by the moist heat this far south. Jazz tumbles through the cracks in the city's sidewalks, mingling with weeds and leftover spring sprouts that have clustered together at the edges of crosswalks. People told me it was a bad idea to move to New Orleans for the summer, but here I am. The heat is unforgiving, the humidity stifling. All I want are bright, tangy, cold foods that match the myriad colors of the buildings I have come to call dear. I find solace from the weather by indulging in sno-balls from the local stand (Piety Sno-Balls) at the corner of Piety and Chartres, a different flavor for each day of the week—black cherry, sour grape, mint green tea, hibiscus pomegranate, and Vietnamese coffee with a generous dollop of condensed milk. Most days I take my dessert to the banks of the Mississippi River, lounging barefoot and chatting with the smiling locals as the colored syrup drips down my forearm. There's something about the energy of this place that makes the days blend together seamlessly. And you, you become steeped in the steady hum. RACHEL EVA LIM

TREAT

TART LEMON SNOW CONES

Around the world, shaved ice—that quintessential summer treat—takes on myriad forms, but it's the snow cones of New Orleans (where they should only be called sno-balls), wild in appearance and flavor, that inspired ours. Bonus: you'll have enough syrup left over for a pitcher of lemonade.

Serves: 4 cups syrup

8 to 10 organic lemons

2 cups sugar

food coloring

heaps of shaved ice
(we found an inexpensive snow cone machine online)

paper cones or cups

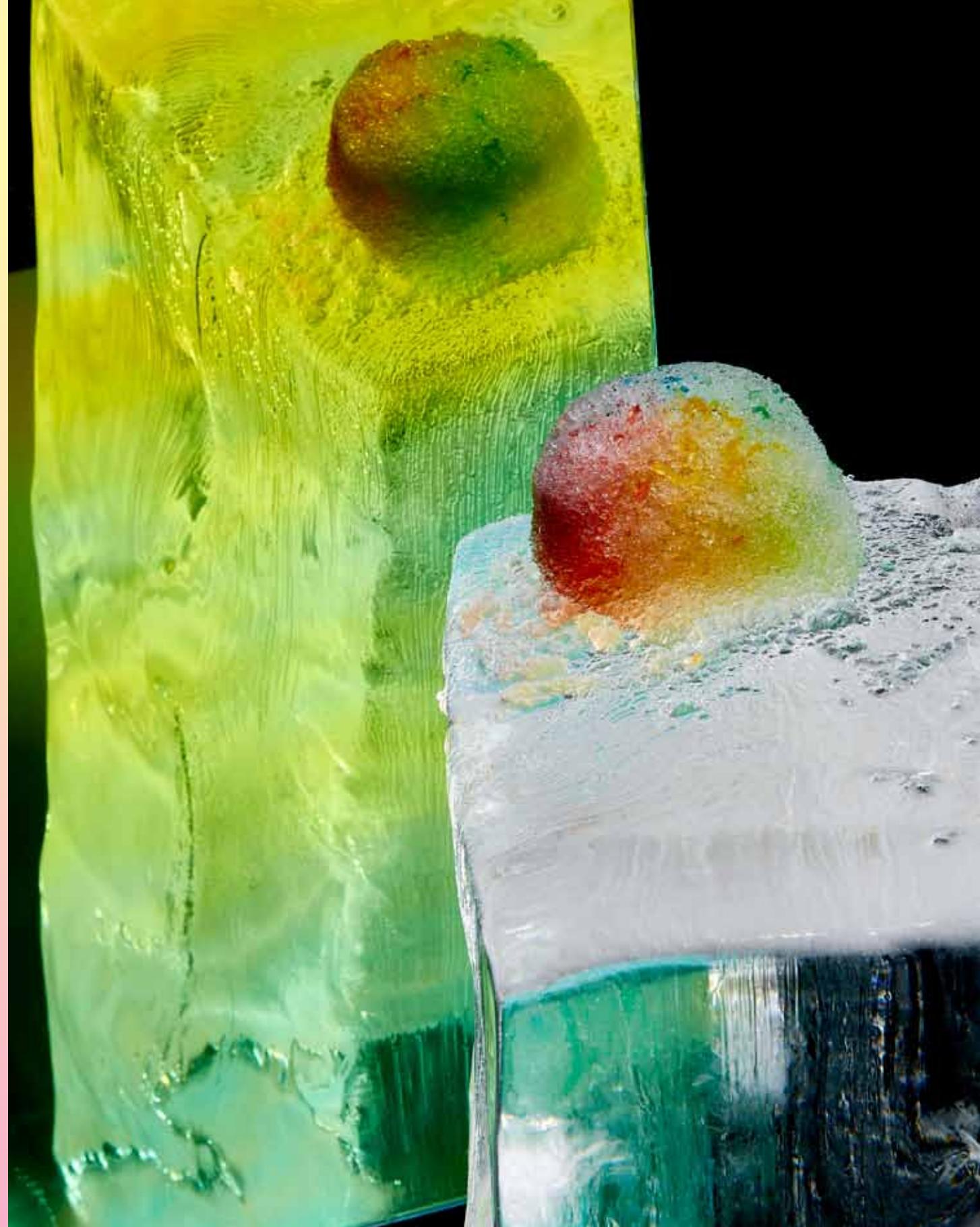
Zest 5 lemons with a vegetable peeler, removing only the yellow. Juice enough lemons to make 1½ cups juice. Add ¾ cup juice to a saucepan and chill the remaining ¾ cup. Add zest, sugar, and 1½ cups water to the saucepan and heat gently, stirring to dissolve sugar without boiling.

Remove syrup from heat, and strain. Cool completely. Stir in remaining lemon juice. Chill well.

For 6 rainbow snow cones, divide about 1¼ cups syrup into 6 cups or bowls and tint with food colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Drizzle in a rainbow over paper cones of shaved ice.

SNOW ANGELS

Growing up in sunny Southern California there were but a few moments when I would have traded sun for snow. Like the moment I realized that 75-degree December days just didn't seem right after a *Christmas Story* marathon. Or the inevitable afternoon mid-August when the temperature would climb to 120° and even swimming pools began to boil. The closest thing to a solution for those blisteringly hot days was the only form of snow I was intimately familiar with: snow cones. The desert's very own version of a snow angel. Variations of the summer treat exist the world over, presumably to combat similarly horrendous heat, but you shouldn't be too quick to assume that all icy-syrupy-stuffed-in-a-paper-cup delights are the same. Every country seems to have their own—from Japan's *kakigori* to Cuba's *granizados*, from Italy's *granitas* to India's *chuskis*. Most vendors offer a rainbow of flavored syrups, but the most crucial distinction is the preparation of the ice itself. The soft shaved ice of Hawaii, like New Orleans's sno-balls and Taiwanese cotton ice is shaved to order and has a consistency reminiscent of a powdery snowfall, while the snow cones of California school carnivals are generated through the grinding of ice blocks that produce larger, crunchier granules. But to me, all of it is the snow that summer dreams are made of. ALICA FORNERET



Forever Florine

Through the magic of Instagram, Florine Stettheimer—a feminist painter, poet, and host of New York’s most fabled gatherings, who passed away more than 70 years ago—has found an audience among a new generation. Born into a privileged upstate New York family in 1871, Stettheimer was provided every support in pursuing a life dedicated to art and leisure. She studied art in New York and then Europe, before returning home at the outbreak of World War I. Alongside her sisters Carrie and Ettie, she hosted a salon that attracted a cosmopolitan mix of artists, writers, and intellectuals. Though she shared close friendships with renowned contemporary artists like Marcel Duchamp, Florine preferred to show her highly decorative and camp portraits in intimate, non-competitive settings—a decision made possible by her inherited wealth but one that prevented her from gaining fame of her own. Known for her personal flair in decorating and dressing (she was described in *Vogue* as an “exponent of fantasy”) among her artistic achievements were the fantastical, baroque costumes and sets (primarily made of cellophane) for Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson’s all-black opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, which premiered in 1933. After a long life passed in the luxury of her cellophane and gold studio, Florine succumbed to cancer in 1944. Though she had wished for all of her artworks to be destroyed, the estate executor (sister Ettie) saved them; Florine Stettheimer’s first major exhibition took place at MoMA two years after her death. Ettie also collected Florine’s many poems into a posthumous collection, *Crystal Flowers*, published in 1949. As the book’s final lines read: Our Parties, Our Picnics, Our Banquets, Our Friends, Have at last a raison d’être, Seen in color and design, It amuses me, To recreate them, To paint them. LAURA MCLAWS HELMS

MORE THAN WORDS

It’s probably an art world novice’s error to confuse work that includes words with poetry, but those of us with words in our blood are prone. To try and decode which of Jenny Holzer’s contradictory *Truisms* she thinks is actually true. To use a Barbara Kruger for an article about relationship violence. I have done both. But even political art using the quite concrete medium of words, is not meant for such literal interpretation. In the age of the tote bag meme, we forget this. The nuance of Tracy Emin’s neon, the shape of Kruger’s font, the scale and weight of Holzer’s lines projected in Times Square or etched into cement—that is where the magic happens. Zoe Leonard’s *I Want a President* is a poem that became visual art organically in being physically shared—today, the worn appearance of the typewritten font, the struck-through text, the wear of the page, all suggest more words about frustration, about revision, about the care put into creating and holding onto such a manifesto. Because as Holzer put it words tend to be inadequate. HOLLY SIEGEL

DINNER WITH FRIENDS I’ve attended a lot of crazy dinner parties—I’ve passed plates to millionaires, WWOOFers, and poodles all at the same table—so I will forever appreciate the significance of dining among an eclectic group of guests. After centuries of women achieving in the shadows, artist Judy Chicago decided to “throw” her own dinner party, an epic celebration of women throughout history who were rarely invited to the proverbial table. In Chicago’s installation, *The Dinner Party*, Emily Dickinson is flanked by a suit-donning-composer (Ethel Smyth) and medical professional-turned-activist (Elizabeth Blackwell). Surrounded by goddesses of fertility and snakes, the women of classical Rome break bread. In total, 39 women—writers, artists, goddesses, doctors, maids—are represented by place settings (an additional 999 names are inscribed on the floor). When speaking about the significance of *The Dinner Party*, Chicago often notes the gap between tangible and historical spaces occupied by women and men—in setting the table she attempted to close that gap, to give women a place to learn about each other. “Men see themselves, their past, and their achievements and that shapes their self-image. It’s really difficult for women to do the same thing with the absence of a history... Men build on their own achievements, but women have no basis to build on.” Despite race, despite profession, and because of gender, Chicago compiled a list of women with one thing in common: Their absence. She built them a platform to stand on, a table to sit at, and some incredibly badass vagina plates so they could finally make the cake and eat it too. ALICA FORNERET



LINDSEY ADELMAN STUDIO

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