



Gibson is used to A-listers, but meeting Tobey Maguire left her starstruck. Really?

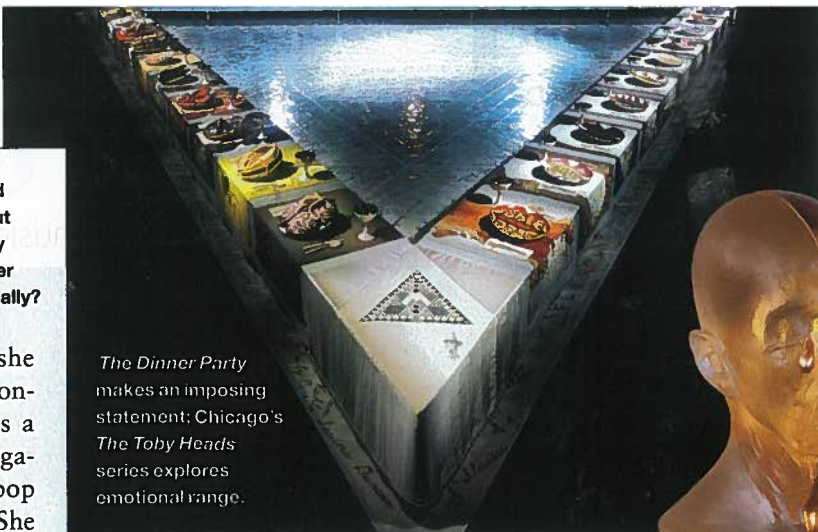
And how she wants to contribute has a definite Gaga-positivity pop ring to it: She says that art has the power

to make people believe in themselves: "My weapon, as I call it, is dance."

It's a tool she harnessed after seeing Alvin Ailey's legendary dance company perform in Toronto when she was a teen. It left such an impression on her that she saved up some money and, at 17, jumped on a Greyhound bus bound for New York to study at the dancer's academy.

Gibson was the inspiration for Jessica Alba's character in the dance flick *Honey*, but she's far from sweet. "I feel like a warrior leader," she explains—fitting, since she gives off a *Mad Max* vibe with her partially shaved head and thigh-high boots. But she's still conflicted about her reputation for being tough and demanding. (She never hesitated to throw down with Diddy on ABC/MTV's *Making the Band* or let her dancers know that they weren't making the cut on E!'s *The Dance Scene*.) "If I were a man, they'd say 'He's a genius!'" says Gibson. "To help build the number one artist, Gaga—if I did all that as a dude, they'd be all over me right now. Instead, it's 'She's tough; she's crazy.'"

Not surprisingly, though, that same fire has cemented Gibson's relationship with Lady Gaga. "She was this artist who had been rejected by other labels, and I was a creative director and choreographer who had also been rejected and was trying to do something different," she says. "Now that it stands where it stands, I'm incredibly proud." □



The Dinner Party makes an imposing statement; Chicago's *The Toby Heads* series explores emotional range.



{ THE PIONEER }

WONDER WOMAN

Artist Judy Chicago takes on the critics.

This summer's blockbusters might boast comic-book heroes, but take it from me: Judy Chicago is a true superhero—able to leap art-world machismo in a single bound. Yet, despite groundbreaking achievements over the past 30 years, she retains a Clark Kent sensibility. "I'm not in love with myself," she says simply. "I have a recalcitrant relationship with my reputation."

Justly credited as a pioneer of feminist art, Chicago is perhaps best known for her monumental piece *The Dinner Party*, a triangular table with 39 elaborate place settings representing mythological and historical women from Sappho to Virginia Woolf. Completed in the '70s, the ceremonial "last supper" has been viewed by more than a million people and is now a permanent feature at the Brooklyn Museum. This spring, the artist travelled north of the border for her current show, *Judy Chicago: Setting the Table*, which showcases a complete set of drawings for *The Dinner Party* and offers a behind-the-scenes look at how the work evolved over five years with the help of hundreds of volunteers. It's at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery (tomthomson.org) in Owen Sound, Ont., through September 25.

When the piece first came out, critics called it "porn" and "kitsch," lambasting the vaginal imagery of the plates for reducing history's heroines to nothing more than their lady parts (they'd been just as brutal about earlier work depicting used tampons—which was less, um, subtle), but Chicago was unfazed. "*The Dinner Party* speaks to the hunger women feel for images that affirm our experiences," she says. "Historically, when women had major aspirations—in my case, to become part of art history—male judgment destroyed or marginalized their accomplishments. They tried it with me; it's a miracle it didn't work."

There are now plans for a virtual "dinner party" honouring contemporary women in an adjoining interactive display. "Technology is opening up areas of interaction that weren't possible before," she says. "Today, people from all over the world study my work. That's pretty fabulous!"

JOANA LOURENCO

ART